

Betsy Glassman

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GAE Committee

GAEstimony@cga.ct.gov

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Dear GAE Committee:

This is my testimony concerning HB 6998.

I am impacted by the state's substandard way of doing business, illustrated by this bill. First, I was informed on Sat. 3/14 by the Rivers Alliance staff that it was first made available to them on the afternoon of 3/12, with a hearing to be held on 3/16. Do you really think a few days that include a weekend are enough time for the public to learn about the act and make comment? I'll bet most state residents would answer NO.

A similar slipshod state procedure occurred in 2013 that has impacted many of us in Litchfield. In late 2012, it came to the attention of concerned citizens that town land had been transferred to a private group in 2008 without proper legal notification of the required town hearing. Soon after the public was informed of the illegal notice, Rep. Craig Miner inserted language in the 2013 Validating Act to "validate" Litchfield's actions, "notwithstanding" two state laws.

Miner's insertion was done at the last minute before the 2013 legislative session ended, and Litchfield was not informed. It appears that legislators did not care what or question why Miner added to the Validating Act at the last minute. Now with this Conveyance Act, there appears to be a pattern of rushing through important legislation that may involve substantial questions of the public interest. There is an appearance of gross impropriety, in fact, in the current procedure that reflects what occurred in 2013; that is, a hasty process that keeps the public in the dark until the last minute.

I am also very concerned about the "notwithstanding" clauses, which set aside state law. Why bother having laws if they are now regularly overridden with "notwithstanding" clauses in hurried procedures with secretive bills and hearings the public can't learn about? The notwithstanding clauses should be thrown out of this and any future legislation.

I am also opposed to any and all deals in which the state grants easements, access and/or land swaps to private entities without full discussion,

disclosure, reasonable time for public hearings (three days including a weekend is not reasonable) and public comment. I further oppose the state's granting state park land (Silver Sands) to a municipality (Milford). We need our state parks to remain intact for public recreation, wildlife habitat and clean water. At the very least, we need time for the public to learn about and comment on this section.

Section 8 of the Conveyance Act was made without the knowledge of DEEP, Aquarion or the Nature Conservancy. This is highly questionable, and the conveyance should not be made without these principals' full knowledge and time for them and the public to make comment.

I request this Conveyance Act be made available to the public for at least three months, at which time the hearings and comment period should begin. The public pays legislators' salaries and has the right to read, discuss, publicize and hold proper hearings with sufficient notification about this act and others.

Frankly, I am disheartened and very troubled by what I am learning about the state legislature. The glaring lack of transparency and rush to pass legislation need to end. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment. Please open up the process and give the public time to learn about and comment on the issues.

Sincerely,

Betsy Glassman
Litchfield, CT