



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – February 13, 2015
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted and Presented by Commissioner Robert J. Klee

Raised Senate Bill No. 866 – An Act Concerning the Leasing of Lighthouse Bottomlands

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding **Raised Senate Bill No. 866 – An Act Concerning the Leasing of Lighthouse Bottomlands**. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

We appreciate the Committee's willingness to raise this bill at the request of DEEP. This proposal, which we strongly support, would expand DEEP's authority to lease state-owned submerged lands to facilitate the transfer of offshore lighthouses under the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act.

Under the federal National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000, the federal government (with the General Services Administration (GSA), the National Park Service, and the Coast Guard playing various roles) may give or sell a historic lighthouse that the Coast Guard no longer wants to maintain to an eligible municipality, nonprofit or individual in order to ensure the historic preservation of the lighthouse. Offshore lighthouses in state waters, such as the Connecticut waters of Long Island Sound, rest on state-owned submerged lands, and the federal GSA will not convey the lighthouse building without a lease from the state allowing occupancy of the submerged lands underlying the lighthouse.

Many coastal states, including New York, have existing submerged lands leasing programs, but Connecticut does not. Therefore, an act of the legislature is required to authorize a state agency (in this case, DEEP) to issue such a lease for the bottomlands beneath a lighthouse. The legislature addressed this issue in 2009 by enacting §22a-27w of the Connecticut General Statutes, which authorized DEEP to issue a submerged lands lease, but only for Penfield Reef lighthouse in Fairfield, which was the structure at issue at the time. However, there are several other offshore lighthouses that GSA would like to transfer, including the Old Saybrook Outer Light and the Stratford Shoal "Middle Island" Light Station, but they have been held up for lack of submerged lands leases. Accordingly, we are submitting this proposal to broaden DEEP's submerged lands leasing authority to all offshore lighthouses in the State's waters.

In summary, DEEP strongly supports **Raised Senate Bill No. 866 – An Act Concerning the Leasing of Lighthouse Bottomlands** and looks forward to working with the Committee and legislators to secure its passage. Both DEEP and our federal partners are anxious to resolve this issue and proceed with the protection of the lighthouses that represent a vital part of Connecticut's maritime heritage.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov (or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).