CONNECTICUT POLICE & FIRE UNION
LOCAL 74 LOCAL S-15
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**TESTIMONY – Judiciary Committee Public Hearing**
**March 20, 2015**

Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and all distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. On behalf of 900 public safety professionals I would like to thank you for your continued efforts and for taking time out of your busy schedules to hear testimony on these very important bills.

My name is Glenn Terlecki and I am the President of the Connecticut Police and Fire Union. Our Union represents State employees in law enforcement and firefighting professions. I am here today to testify in **support** of two bills:

**Raised S.B. No. 1094 "AN ACT CONCERNING ASSAULT WITH ENHANCED PENALTIES"**

The basis of this bill is to amend Section 53a-167c of the general statutes. S.B. No. 1094 would simply add the job title of Animal Control Officer (ACO) into the definition of already covered law enforcement officials. A violation and conviction of this offense is a class C felony and could land a perpetrator in prison up to ten (10) years.

ACOs are some of the most dedicated but unrecognized law enforcement officers in this State. ACOs conduct investigations and enforce Connecticut's laws and regulations pertaining to cruelty to domestic animals, rabies exposure and nuisance and roaming animals.

ACOs are uniformed individuals who often work alone. Their only prospect of mutual aid is summoned by a cell phone call to 911. These officers often face extremely challenging situations and, at times, unruly people. Because there is no current law covering these officers if assaulted, an offending individual may only be charged with a Class B misdemeanor.

There is no fiscal note associated with this amendment. This is simply a matter of holding perpetrators who assault animal control officers properly accountable for their actions. There would be no increase in animal control officers' statutory authority, jurisdiction, certification, training, pay, retirement or benefits. These men and women do a great service to the citizens of the State of Connecticut and deserve this level of protection.

**Raised S.B. No. 1106 "AN ACT CONCERNING THE INDEMNIFICATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS"**

This bill fixes language in Section 53-39a of the general statutes to include all police officers employed by a law enforcement unit as defined by Section 7-294. The current language allows police officers who are prosecuted for a crime allegedly committed in the course of their employment

to be indemnified by his employer for economic loss sustained by him as a result of such prosecution in cases where the charges are dismissed or the officer is found not guilty. This includes payment of attorney fees, costs incurred during prosecution and costs incurred to enforce this section.

The statute defines a police officer as an officer of the State Police, State Capitol Police or local police department. This raises some question whether the current language inadvertently excludes police officers employed by various agencies of the State of Connecticut. The Connecticut Police and Fire Union has nearly 400 certified police officers employed at over 17 different State agency police departments. These officers hold the same certifications and are exposed to the same potential for prosecution as all police officers in Connecticut. In the event that one of these officers finds themselves exonerated after a lengthy prosecution effort, there should be no question whether or not they are indemnified.

This legislation also shifts the role of the indemnifier from the employing agency to the agency that charged or prosecuted the officer. There is ongoing debate and legislative proposals that call for independent agencies/departments to conduct the investigation when there is an event of alleged officer misconduct, use of force incident or an officer involved shooting. The employing agency may not be the governmental unit that decides to bring charges or prosecute the officer. Therefore, the employing agency should not automatically suffer the penalty to make whole such officer who sustained the economic loss.

This legislation will clarify that all police officers are covered under Section 53-39a and place the responsibility of the potential indemnifier upon the governmental unit that believes there is enough formative evidence to bring prosecution.

I encourage you to support both of these legislative bills.

**Glenn Terlecki, President**

**Connecticut Police and Fire Union**