



**Statement on HB 5150 - An Act Concerning Tree Wardens' Notices On Trees And Shrubs Prior To Removal, Tree Removal Along State Highways And Clean-Up By Public Utility Corporations Following Certain Tree Removal.**

**Connecticut General Assembly  
Environment Committee  
February 19, 2016**

Connecticut's electric utility companies play a critical role in the delivery of reliable power to businesses and residents across the state. In the wake of recent major storms, these companies, in concert with state regulators and lawmakers, developed and deployed significant system hardening initiatives. These efforts incorporate a comprehensive vegetation management plan that includes systematic tree trimming and removal of trees and shrubs that threaten electric distribution and transmission lines. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to strengthen Connecticut's electric system infrastructure and its reliability.

While we agree that it is important to preserve trees, shrubs, and vegetation for both ecological and aesthetic reasons, HB 5150 will hamper utility companies' efforts to improve our state's electrical system. This legislation adds new, excessive mandates that place an increased burden on utilities and higher costs on municipalities. HB 5150 requires municipal Tree Wardens to "make a posting on each tree, shrub or group of shrubs for which such a permit is sought" and further, to hold a public hearing "if any person, firm or corporation objects to the proposed cutting or removal, in whole or in part." Imposing these changes would effectively halt the programs currently deployed by utilities to make our electrical system's infrastructure more resilient. Further, despite the fact that this legislation seeks to impose new mandates on municipal Tree Wardens, it fails to take into account the fact that only an estimated 30 of Connecticut's 169 municipalities have active Tree Wardens. Requiring an inactive Tree Warden to convene a public hearing to address every objection to a tree or shrub being trimmed will cause undue delays and create unnecessary financial hardship to cities and towns in the state.

HB 5150 seeks to create unneeded regulatory hurdles and costs without substantial benefit to commercial or residential electric customers and we urge the members of the Environment Committee to oppose this legislation.

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