

***Testimony Regarding Construction of a State Police Training Complex and Support of Sen. Guglielmo's Bill no. 234***

I am a seventh generation Michigander. I grew up in the house my mother grew up in, which had been built by my grandfather. I used to teach middle school, and counted people who had once taught me among my colleagues. I am a person who deeply values and understands the importance of roots.

When we moved to Connecticut, I was an outsider in every way. Family culture, socioeconomic background, religious beliefs, all of them marked me as "the other" in my new town of Simsbury, Connecticut. It is no exaggeration to say that oftentimes the only peace and serenity I could find in my new town was at the top of Talcott Mountain, looking over the new valley I called home.

But even that peace was ephemeral and fragile. Often, so very often, I would crest the Heublein Tower trail, look down at the Farmington River unfurling beneath me, and hear the unmistakable sounds of gunfire. State Troopers training at the base of the mountain filled the air with gunfire, that psychologically unmistakable sound that no one should be asked to learn to tune out, even if it were physically possible.

Then, after five years in Simsbury, my family moved to Willington. It was like a rebirth. Suddenly, I was back on familiar ground- among people whose roots ran deep, whose families stretched back in that town for generations, where the very best of rural life shone through like a beacon.

And then came that day in May when the State Police came to town and dropped their bombshell in our collective laps. It was madness. A training complex, big enough to train all 1200 or so Troopers in a three-month period, to be constructed less that two miles from where the town's elementary schoolchildren played? A complex where military-grade weaponry would be employed, within walking distance of the town green? A piece of Willington, replete with vernal ponds and watersheds, to be subjected to the same lead exposure as the Simsbury site, known to undergo lead remediation?

How was this possible? How could this town, this specific spot within the town, have made the final cut? How could the State Troopers be staring my townspeople in the face and tell them that a massive complex, to be constructed without any sound baffling, and in such close proximity to public spaces, be the best solution the state could find?

So I have no choice but to fight for my town. To fight against a massive overbuild by the State Police. A massive overbuild that is sited dangerously close to people and to natural resources, all at a price tag that has been lied about and revealed to be catastrophic to a state in dire financial waters.

I urge the lawmakers to help us fight for this town of Willington. To enact legislation that would require the state to be fiscally responsible, using space that is already owned, and to conduct an inquiry into what the State Police honestly need to get their much-deserved training, and get it quickly, rather than sailing off into massive overbuilds containing a good deal of wants.

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