



Public Hearing – March 16, 2018
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert Klee

HB 5454 – AN ACT CONCERNING NINETY-DAY PERMIT TURNAROUND TIMES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 5454.

HB 5454 addresses a problematic provision in the bipartisan budget (Section 516) that deems certain permits to be approved by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) if not acted upon within 90 days. This provision raises the likelihood that some permits would be automatically and arbitrarily approved without review sufficient to ensure that human health and environmental standards are met.

No application to apply pesticides to state waters or by aircraft, or to operate a waste water treatment or solid waste facility, or acting as a licensed environmental professional authorized to make decisions on the adequacy of the clean-up of pollution, or to authorize on an emergency basis the discharge hazardous pollutants into waters of the state, or other activities covered in last year's budget should be approved absent the review of an application.

HB 5454 acknowledges and corrects this problem, and makes other needed technical revisions by eliminating references to applications that are not for permits, such as professional certifications, or do not exist at all. HB 5454 also includes statutory or regulatory citations for clarity.

While it eliminates arbitrary approval, HB 5454 maintains language that ensures that applicants receive timely follow-up from the Department. This language is in line with DEEP's ongoing process improvement efforts and will ensure that we will continue to strive for greater efficiency in processing permits.

The Department has worked closely with members of the General Assembly and stakeholders to continuously improve the process by which the Department issues permits. Working closely with stakeholders, the Department has undertaken comprehensive self-assessments, including numerous LEAN evaluations (LEAN is a process improvement approach that identifies and minimizes wasted time and effort), and implemented tools for both applicants and Department staff, including online applications, and web-based updates on the progress of some permits. This work continues.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact Lee Sawyer, DEEP's Legislative Liaison, at 860-424-3332 or Lee.Sawyer@ct.gov.