



OFFICE OF THE
WATER POLLUTION
CONTROL AUTHORITY

TOWN OF VERNON WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY

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Testimony in Support of H.B. 5130

Dear Members of the Environment Committee,

The Vernon Water Pollution Control Authority by consensus supports House Bill 5130 which would require continuing Education for Waste Water Operators. Continuing Education requirements for Wastewater Operators will encourage professionals to expand their knowledge through training and education and ultimately enhance the safe and effective practices in the wastewater field. Wastewater utilities are multi-billion-dollar investments (treatment facilities, pipe, billing systems, etc.) designed to protect priceless resources (human health, rivers, groundwater supply, Long Island Sound, etc.). Wastewater operations is a dynamic technology-intensive field that requires routine learning to keep up with the constantly evolving regulations, treatment and management practices.

With this new training requirement, utility employers will need to pay for operator training and allow for training time during work hours. Many Connecticut operators currently feel that professional development is a low priority for their employers. This has resulted in a significant knowledge gap for Connecticut utilities and a deficient wastewater educational network. We need to institute operator training requirements in Connecticut to reengage the wastewater workforce, defend the State's multi-billion-dollar investment, and most importantly, protect human health and the environment.

Facts

State Competition

- Water System Operators in CT have had Continuing Education Requirements for more than a decade
- 47 states have operator Continuing Education Requirements for wastewater operators
- Connecticut is 1 of 3 remaining states without Continuing Education requirements (CT, RI & AL)

Financial Risk

- A wastewater utility in Connecticut generally represents as much as 15% - 30% of annual municipal spending
- The average wastewater budget in Connecticut is more than \$1 million dollars per year
- For FY2015 & FY2016, the State of Connecticut is investing approximately \$1.5B in Clean Water Funds into capital projects at wastewater utilities. All but \$17M of this money is state funded.

State-wide Support

- This legislative change is supported by the wastewater community. Specific supporters include:
 - o State Agencies
 - CT Department of Energy and Environment (CTDEEP)
 - CT Certification and Advisory Council (CAC)
 - o Wastewater Associations
 - The Connecticut Water Pollution Abatement Association (CWPAAs)
 - The Connecticut Association of Water Pollution Control Authorities (CAWPCA)
 - The New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA)
 - New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC)
 - o Municipal Utilities
 - 95% of Wastewater Operators surveyed are in favor of this legislation
 - 150+ municipal WPCA members of CAWPCA representing more than 3,000,000 Connecticut residents
 - 80+ Water Pollution Control Facilities and a network of 900 certified operators serving more than 2,000,000 Connecticut residents

E. Ray Weaver
Chairman, Vernon Water Pollution Control Authority