

I write to oppose the referenced bills, which would decimate the accounts necessary to operate our land trust, and many like it. In particular, I am a member of the board of The Newtown Forest Association, Inc. Our national award winning organization is operated by an all volunteer board. It oversees over 1,000 acres of land which has been left to the NFA for protection in perpetuity. We were lucky enough a few years ago to receive a substantial endowment. Our entire organization effectively lives on the income from this endowment. It would be wiped out by the legislation under consideration.

I don't think our organization is unlike most other land trusts in the state.

If the purpose of the legislation is to get large organizations, including those with billion dollar endowments, such as Yale, to make up for the lost revenue from tax exempt real estate, then the proposed legislation should focus on that. However, the legislation is far too broadly drafted and will ruin most, if not all land trusts in the state, forcing them to limp along from year to year begging for funds. That is no way to preserve wild and natural places, which most Connecticut residents appreciate and enjoy. It will bankrupt any land trust in no time.

Did anyone even think about how this legislation would affect the land trusts of Connecticut?

The timing of the legislation is also particularly unfair to land trusts. Because the values placed on their land have been irrelevant since they acquired them, the typical trust hasn't challenged any assessment that they would never have to pay. Land with no development rights has little value. All land trusts should be given the opportunity to challenge assessments before they are obliged to make payments "in lieu of tax".

I strongly urge you to discontinue consideration of this very bad legislation.

Edward J. Kelleher, Esq.

Mix & Goldman, LLC
17 Downs St., Danbury, CT
Tel: 203-744-0004 X207
Fax: 203-790-6663
e-mail: ekelleher@mixgoldman.com
www.danbury-attorneys.com