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Title:

Organization or Agency: NA

Topic: HB05047 - AA IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENERAL GOVERNMENT.

Opposes

Testimony:

Note On My Opposition To Proposed Legislation To Abolish The Connecticut Port Authority

Gov. Lamont has recently proposed legislation to abolish the independent Connecticut Port Authority as it is presently constituted, and to replace it with a non-independent Connecticut Maritime Authority enfolded into the Connecticut Airport Authority.

To enfold the operations of a successful Connecticut Port Authority into the Connecticut Airport Authority seems misguided to me. Indeed, having read the proposed legislation, I can see no compelling reason presented in the legislation as to why this should be proposed.

Connecticut is a maritime state with an unbroken coastline and with a rich maritime heritage of commercial, trade and recreational boating history going back to colonial times. As such, it seems self-evident that the state should have an independent maritime authority dedicated to the stewardship and enhancement of this heritage. Furthermore, the current Connecticut Port Authority board of directors, which would be eliminated and replaced by the Connecticut Airport Authority board, has institutional maritime, international trade and finance experience which benefits the operations of the Authority. I don't see evidence that the board of the Airport Authority has such collective experience sufficient to guide deliberations about Connecticut's maritime matters.

Since its inception, the Connecticut Port Authority has accomplished much, to include:

- The brilliantly successful construction and enhancement of the State Pier in New London to ready it for the assembly and transport of offshore wind turbines. The State Pier is currently the only such facility in the nation.

- The very successful Small Harbor Improvements Project Program which to date has distributed some \$5.5 million, with more in the pipeline, to small harbors up and down the coastline.

- Deepwater port projects continue apace to improve and support port infrastructure at the granular level to include improved rail access to our ports.

- The continuation of various education outreach programs within the community.

The Port Authority also supports the significant recreational boating community at smaller harbors in the state through the SHIPP program mentioned above. Also, this program supports the viability of the state's commercial fishing industry. For example, when I lived in Darien, CT., there was a tiny harbor called Pear Tree Point harbor. While principally a recreational boating harbor, it was also home port to four commercial fishing vessels. I am sure other examples of this can be cited along the state's coastline of smaller harbors.

It seems to me that the question becomes had the Port Authority in its present form not existed, would any of these accomplishments been achieved? Would they have been accomplished as a division of an Airport Authority with a board of directors as attentive to maritime issues as the Port Authority's is?

So, in my opinion, keep the Port Authority as it is presently constituted. It is on a major roll!

As the old saying has it: "if it ain't broke, don't fix it".

Gaffney J. Feskoe

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