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February 2nd, 2025

Opposed to Raised Bill 1193: An Act Concerning The Composition Of The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority

Dear Chairs Needleman and Steinberg, Ranking Members Fazio and Marra, and members of the Committee:

I am writing in opposition to - *An Act Concerning The Composition Of The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority*.

Current law (C.G.S. § 16-2 (a)) states the following:

"There shall continue to be a Public Utilities Regulatory Authority within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, which shall consist of five electors of this state, appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of both houses of the General Assembly. Not more than three members of said authority in office at any one time shall be members of any one political party. The Governor shall appoint five members to the authority."

There are two very important and readily defined parts of C.G.S. § 16-2 (a) that immediately draw attention to what must be done per law and what has not been done to date:

1.) The PURA "***shall consist of five electors of this state***" and
2.) "***The Governor shall appoint five members to the authority***".

My constituents, many of my fellow legislators, and I find it puzzling and disappointing that state law has not been followed. Major decisions by the PURA have been made and continue to be made that have had and will have substantive impacts, including financial, upon the people and business of Connecticut, especially the rate payers, by only a smaller number of PURA Commissioners than is required by law. This makes no sense.

I do not find it appropriate, and I think our constituents would agree, that just because the law is not being followed for no clear reason that the legislature should change the law to decrease the number of PURA Commissioners to match the current number. This makes no sense

Furthermore, Raised Bill 1193 allows the PURA Chairperson to assign any matter that comes before the PURA to only one Commissioner, instead of to the current minimum of three (as a panel). Only one Commissioner could have a matter assigned to him or her? Any thus only one Commissioner in such a situation could decide if a public hearing is to be conducted? If such a Commissioner were to decide to not hold a public hearing, then that one person has shut out the public from participation in what state government is doing. This is not fair to the public, especially to the rate payers.

It should be noted that in decisions by the PURA, including major decisions financially impacting people and businesses everywhere and across Connecticut, a majority currently is only two Commissioners. If current law is followed, which it ought to be, then a majority of the legally required five PURA Commissioners would be three Commissioners. It is not fair to shrink the required number of PURA Commissioners and thereby the majority vote number when big decisions are made.

I note that a bill I submitted, SB 318, has seven important provisions within it, including that any vacancy on the PURA be filled within ninety days (and not let to stay vacant for very long periods of time, if not indefinitely) and that a Commissioner be term limited to no more than three terms (each term of a PURA Commissioner is four years).

I ask that the Committee not cut the number of PURA Commissioners currently required by law and instead refocus its efforts on finding out why the PURA has been allowed to have less than the statutorily required five Commissioners and ensuring that the current law is not only enforced but also followed.

Sincerely,