



Town of Fairfield

Office of the First Selectman
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For Immediate Release

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Governor Signs Bill Restructuring Connecticut Siting Council; Applauded by Town of Fairfield

HB 5507 Becomes Law; Corrects Regulatory Bias Favoring Utility Companies

Fairfield, CT, June 12, 2024 - Yesterday, Governor Ned Lamont officially signed HB 5507, a significant piece of legislation correcting regulatory bias currently favoring utility companies, into law. HB 5507- An Act Concerning State Agency and Court Proceedings Relating to Electric Transmission Lines—now ensures a fairer balance with the needs and rights of Connecticut residents, businesses, and municipalities in matters relating to infrastructure siting, use of land, and construction. The governor’s signature signals the most significant change to the regulations governing the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) since its creation in 1981 under Connecticut Public Act 81-369.

“We are grateful to Governor Lamont for hearing the voices of residents throughout the state and signing HB 5507 into law,” said Fairfield’s First Selectman Bill Gerber. “The Governor’s action has unequivocally established the rights of municipalities to participate more fully in Connecticut Siting Council decisions. HB 5507 signed into law serves as a testament to the power of citizen advocacy. Our Administration would like to personally thank Representative Jennifer Leeper and Senator Tony Hwang of Fairfield, Representative Steven Stafstrom of Bridgeport and Representative Matt Blumenthal of Stamford for their extraordinary work in writing and passing this bill.”

Jennifer Leeper (D-Fairfield) stated, “I am thrilled that Governor Lamont signed HB-5507 into law yesterday. I am also endlessly grateful that the Governor and his team worked hand-in-hand with us through this process to help us get this complex and expansive legislation passed, particularly in a short session. While this legislation doesn't reverse what has happened here in Fairfield and Bridgeport, it does ensure that future communities cannot be steamrolled by our utilities. It also provides a path for an improved process when we are, hopefully, successful in our appeal. This final signage is the result of an incredible team working together - start to finish - and I can't thank our community enough for the engagement, advocacy, and support.”

State Senator Tony Hwang (R-Fairfield) said, “HB 5507 is a landmark legislation that increases accountability for the Siting Council and Utility Companies, demanding a more transparent process. This bill passage was a total team effort, and I am proud to have supported it through the legislative process and successfully passing it in the state Senate. While this legislative win is significant, our work is not finished. We need UI to engage, reopen the project proposal, and ultimately bury the lines. Thank you to Steve and Andrea Ozyck, Meghan McCloat, Stephanie Coakley, Sabrina Smeltz, David Parker, Paul Whitmore, Steven Trinkaus, Michael and Thomas Schinella, Sean Kelly, Drummond Bell, and Donald Sherman, among countless many others, for standing up for our community, environment, and property owners in Fairfield and Southport.”

“United Illuminating’s proposed project will have a devastating impact on our community and regional economy,” said Steve Stafstrom (D- Bridgeport), Co-Chair of the Judiciary Committee, who introduced HB 5507 on the House Floor. “Unfortunately, the Siting Council has proven itself as unwilling or unable to protect us. This legislation is just the first step and we look forward to revisiting this issue again next session after DEEP releases its mandated study on the Siting Council’s administrative shortcomings.”

"I'm grateful and glad that the Governor has signed into law our bill to reform the Connecticut Siting Council," said State Rep. Matt Blumenthal, (D-Stamford). "For far too long, many have considered the Siting Council opaque, imperious, and too cozy with our state's public utilities. Its decisions have far-reaching effects for ratepayers and communities, approving projects that cost hundreds of millions of dollars and can support or devastate communities. These reforms will help ensure that the Council has the independence, procedures, and transparency necessary to properly vet proposed projects and verify they serve our ratepayers and communities. Our state deserves nothing less."

Co-signers and supporters of the bill included Representatives Cristin McCarthy Vahey (D-Fairfield) and Sarah Keitt (D-Fairfield).

The new law has particular significance for Fairfield and Bridgeport, both of which opposed an application by United Illuminating (UI) to install a 7.3 mile stretch of massive monopoles requiring 19.25 acres of permanent easements on private and public property along the Metro North Railroad (MNR) tracks. In addition to subjecting property owners to material restrictions on use of their land, this UI project would scar both municipalities’ visual landscapes for generations. Some property owners were not aware of UI’s plans until workers appeared in their backyards marking trees for destruction, highlighting deficiencies in the current notification requirements.

While the CSC recognized the excessive destruction that would be caused by UI’s MNR-South proposal by not voting for it, the CSC nonetheless proceeded to approve an alternative, conceptual route to the north of the railroad tracks for which no detailed designs have been submitted. Property owners along any potential MNR-North route have been denied due process and, depending on UI’s future design, could be facing permanent easements over their properties with no right to defend themselves. In response, the Town of Fairfield, the City of Bridgeport, Sasco Creek Neighbors Environmental Trust, Inc. (SCNETI), the Pequot Library, Southport Congregational Church, as well as several other intervening parties, have filed appeals with the CT Superior Court against this decision by the Siting Council.

HB 5507 provides for the following:

- More definitive and clear notice to residents regarding project design and impact on abutters
- Automatic intervenor status for impacted residents and businesses
- More weight given to fiscal impact of a project
- More robust financial analysis of proposed project and alternatives
- Access to independent experts
- Municipalities can recoup legal fees if they win appeal
- Increase municipal participation funds for towns
- Requiring any project that takes land to be classified as a modification and not a rebuild

"We are thrilled with the overwhelming bipartisan support for HB 5507 and grateful that Governor Lamont signed it into law. This legislation marks a significant step towards prioritizing our communities, environment, and personal property rights and it underscores our commitment to a fairer, more transparent process that truly serves the best interests of the state of CT," said Stephen and Andrea Ozyck, co-founders of SCNETI.

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