

Connecticut State Grange

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 36, RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE TO PROTECT CERTAIN PROPERTY HELD OR CONTROLLED BY THE STATE FOR CONSERVATION, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE OR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES

MARCH 14, 2016

I am Gordon Gibson of Vernon, Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut State Grange, speaking today in support of Senate Joint Resolution 36, Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of the State to Protect Certain Property Held or Controlled by the State for Conservation, Recreation, Open Space or Agricultural Purposes. The Grange has supported the preservation of our natural resources ever since it was founded in 1867 because of their importance to the quality of our lives. I supervised the acquisition of land and easements for the various programs of the former Department of Environmental Protection for 19 years and am very familiar with the time, effort and money needed to accomplish those acquisitions. Many times people sold or donated their land to the State because they felt that was the most secure way to preserve our natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations of Connecticut residents and visitors. Now people are losing their faith in the State's promises to preserve their land which contributes so much to the quality of life in Connecticut because the State has proposed putting our supposedly preserved land to other uses. The Grange therefore supports the proposed amendment to the State Constitution to protect and preserve the environmental and natural resources of the State.

The Grange is pleased to see that Joint Resolution 36 includes agricultural land as we requested in my testimony before the Environment Committee on Senate Joint Resolution 15. We suggest that the proposed amendment to the State Constitution be expanded to specifically include easements concerning the development rights to privately owned farmland held by the State under the custody and control of the Department of Agriculture.

Subsequent to my testimony on Joint Resolution 15 before the Environment Committee on February 19, 2106 a question was raised as to how the State could determine which property was acquired for the purposes stated in Joint Resolution 15. During the time I worked at the former Department of Environmental Protection every deed or easement we took for the State contained a reference to the section of the General Statutes or Special Act authorizing DEP to take that deed or easement. The answer to the question raised at the Environment Committee hearing is to check the statutory references in the instruments.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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