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CONNECTICUT  
SITING COUNCIL

September 8, 2004

Honorable Pamela B. Katz  
Chairman  
Connecticut Siting Council  
Ten Franklin Square  
New Britain, Ct. 06501

Re: The Buffer Zone Provision of Public Act 04-246

Dear Chairman Katz and Siting Council Members:

As legislators from Eastern Connecticut and the Connecticut River Valley and Shoreline, we have followed the regulatory proceedings regarding the proposed 345 kv power lines with keen interest. Adequate, safe and reliable electric services are priorities for every community across Connecticut. We're submitting this testimony to you today to express our concerns regarding the impact of Council decisions on our constituents.

We wish to impress upon you the statewide implications of this decision and the possible economic consequences of aesthetic but non-essential upgrades.

Your findings – and decisions – regarding the validity of any known health consequences regarding proximity to these power lines and any considerations regarding community aesthetics being contemplated should lead to a consistent statewide policy. We believe it is important to consider the perspective of the entire state, certainly those communities who have hosted existing 345 power lines in their communities for many years.

If there is any proof of legitimate health concerns you should begin to undertake the appropriate mitigation in those communities that have shouldered the most significant burden in supplying power throughout the State. Please recognize that we will take any action necessary to ensure that our constituents receive fair and equal treatment.

It is not our intention to impede legitimate negotiation with newly affected communities; we remain hopeful that legitimate accommodation can be reached. However, we will analyze and assess these accommodations and expect similar treatment whenever and wherever appropriate. We also believe that if unsubstantiated claims lead to "gold plating" – i.e. significant considerations based largely on aesthetic considerations - these considerations should be statewide.

We are hopeful that your decisions will reflect the extremely complex scientific and technical analysis and feasibility assessments necessary to complete these critical projects and not a simple reaction to the typical NIMBY ("not in my back yard") argument.

Connecticut's Siting Council was constituted to find solutions to highly complex issues of significant impact to our state. And while it is sometimes part of human nature to delay and avoid difficult decisions, which are contrary to our individual preferences, Connecticut's failure to address these issues in a timely fashion will have significant economic consequences.

We are also concerned with the lack of discussion of ratepayer cost implications of these projects. State agencies such as the Siting Council have traditionally scrutinized utility proposals to mitigate fiscal impact on ratepayers. In this case it appears that the utilities are being chastised for not stretching both the engineering feasibility and ratepayer impact. We remain hopeful that this issue – with implications that run into the tens and possibly even the hundreds of millions of dollars – will be part of the discussions and deliberations of the Council.

As we are sure you are aware, both ISO and FERC are moving forward on proposals to split Connecticut into two pricing zones, designed to impose economic penalties into regional energy supply decisions. These developments provide further evidence that these projects must be completed in the most timely – and economically responsible - manner possible.

Since the Blackout in the summer of 2003, the need for prudent and strategic investment in our infrastructure has become abundantly clear. Extensive media coverage has documented the fragile nature of our energy supply network and the expanded electrical needs and demands of residential and industrial and commercial customers.

This issue has enormous impact on the day-to-day life of every Connecticut resident, the electricity they use and on the rates they pay. We urge the Council to keep a statewide perspective as you work to resolve this complex issue.

Sincerely,



Representative Jack Malone



Representative Brian O'Connor