

## **The Energy And Technology Committee**

**February 28, 2006**

### **Senate Bill 48: AAC A State Department Of Energy**

#### **Testimony of**

#### **The Office of Consumer Counsel**

#### **Mary J. Healey, Consumer Counsel**

The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC), the independent state advocate for consumer interests in all matters which may affect Connecticut consumers with respect to public service companies, including electric suppliers, supports the concept of Senate Bill 48: AAC A State Department Of Energy and the Governor's goal of promoting a cohesive state energy planning focus through a Department of Energy.

OCC looks forward to working with the Governor, the legislature, and other stakeholders on the details of this proposal as it moves through the legislative process. While there are some key details that we believe need revision, this proposal may well be a positive addition to the governmental response to the energy crisis facing Connecticut, especially in implementing long-term and comprehensive energy planning goals and actions.

This bill seeks to create a successor department (DOE) with respect to the duties of the Office of Policy and Management and the Connecticut Energy Advisory Board (CEAB), and appoint two nonvoting members to the Department of Public Utility Control, qualified by education or experience, to serve for terms coterminous with the Governor, one of whom shall represent residential consumers and the other to represent commercial consumers.

Concerns that the OCC would raise concerning the bill that warrant further consideration by all interested parties include:

The OCC has statutory authority to participate at the federal level on energy issues and, for instance, has been successful in the recent FERC settlement negotiations concerning power plant costs in Connecticut. The OCC should continue to have the authority to represent utility customers at the federal level, in addition to representation by the DOE and the DPUC;

The OCC has been a member of the CEAB from its inception and believes that organization has merit, whether under the umbrella of the DOE or continuing as a separate independent entity: the OCC should continue to have the authority to fulfill its statutory role in the activities of

CEAB; and

While the idea of two nonvoting commissioners to represent commercial and residential consumers respectively may have merit on its face, it deserves further discussion and clarification as to their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the role of OCC as the independent state advocate for all utility consumers.

The OCC would very much want to participate in all activities related to this bill and believes it can bring detailed expertise that will serve to make this bill a force for positive change.