

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-144 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR LOCAL REPRESENTATION ON THE
Title: CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL.

Vote Date: 3/4/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/20/2026

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environmental Committee

Co-Sponsors:

Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.

Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st Dist.

Rep. Bill Buckbee, 67th Dist.

Sen. Jeff Gordon, 35th Dist.

Sen. Paul Cicarella 34th Dist.

Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.

Rep. Mark W. Anderson, 62nd Dist.

Sen Heather S. Somers, 18th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To provide local representation on the Connecticut Siting Council. S.B. No. 144 would require that one elector, from each municipality where a facility is proposed to be located, be appointed to the Siting Council as a nonvoting member to the Siting Council.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont

Governor Lamont reiterated opposition to the bill citing that SB-144 is nearly identical to SB-73 which was vetoed in the 2023 session. The response restates 2023 testimony in opposition to SB-73. The bill would allow municipalities to participate in Council proceedings from both sides: both as a party and through a representative member who may be privy to privileged or sensitive information. This would then create a conflict on interest for a party who may later file an appeal to also appoint a representative to the decision-making body from which the appeal may be taken.

The Siting Council has indicated that the fiscal impact of the bill is understated and is based exclusively on the number of regular meetings held by the council and does not take into consideration the number of public hearings and other proceedings held by the Council on an annual basis. Since the council is funded by electric ratepayers and telecommunications customers it could lead to increased costs for those consumers.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Pete Bass, Mayor, Town of New Milford

Mayor Bass expresses strong support for SB-144 and believes that adding local representative to participate in relevant Siting Council proceedings would improve overall coordination within the Council's statewide authority. The Mayor suggests that the representatives should be granted full participatory rights in proceedings, including the ability to question witnesses, submit evidence, and engage fully in deliberations. In addition, they suggest that the Siting Council should be required to include specific written findings on a proposal's consistent with the host municipality's Plan of Conservation and Development, as well as potential impacts on prime agricultural soils, active farmland (where applicable), and open space.

James Berardino, Legislative Director, CT Council of Small Towns

In his testimony, Mr. Berardino expressed that allowing towns sufficient representation on Siting Council projects within their jurisdiction, would allow the Siting Council to better navigate their duties rather than through expeditions of surveying local needs, constraints, and boundaries specific to the municipality. He also expresses that the language in **Section 1(d)** can be further improved by amending the bill to include municipal voting power on the CT siting council.

Jason E. Bowsza, First Selectman, Town of East Windsor

First Selectman Bowsza expresses that Lines 34-44 are long overdue. Explains that state municipalities should gain representation on the CT Siting Council when projects are proposed in their municipal boundaries. He expressed a discrepancy that since municipalities are statutorily required to prepare Plans of Conservation and Development (POCDs) every ten years, the State is not obligated to consider those locally adopted plans when making siting determinations. First Selectman Bowsza suggests that Line 15 of SB-144 should be amended by adding a line that enables the governor to appoint five public members who has experience in the field of ecology, at least one shall have served as a chief executive officer in municipal government, either as a mayor, first selectman, town manager, or town administrator. This is because including a voting member with executive municipal experience would greatly improve the body's institutional capacity.

Laurie Burstein, First Selectman, Town of Ellington

First Selectman Burstein testifies that municipalities have statutory responsibilities under Connecticut statute 8-23 to adopt and implement a Plan of Conversation and Development that protects agricultural resources, guides land use, and preserves community character. She also cites under CGS § 16-50k et seq., the Connecticut Siting Council exercises exclusive jurisdiction over the siting of electric generating facilities greater than one megawatt. As a result, municipalities directly impacted by these facilities have limited formal participation in final decision-making. She suggests the following refinements in SB-144: that all municipal representatives is afforded full participation in evidentiary proceedings, require that siting council make specific written finding addressing the host municipality's Plan of Conversation and Development, and lastly, encourage or require applicants to present their proposal to the local planning and zoning commission prior to final Siting Council action, so that local concerns and recommendations may be formally entered into the record

Rachel Briggs, Staff Attorney, Conversation Law Foundation

Attorney Briggs, propose that the legislature should assign exclusive consolidated authority to the Siting Council over renewable energy projects above a certain megawatt threshold (including battery storage and the transmission infrastructure needed for the clean energy transition) so that there is a consolidated permitting process and applicants no longer need to seek additional permits from DEEP and other state agencies. Along with this, they suggest that the legislature should require public information sessions for petitions for a ruling on projects cited in Environmental Justice communities as defined in CGS 22a-20a. They add that the legislature should add a cumulative impact analysis, which would be created in consultation with environmental justice experts at DEEP. The report would clarify Connecticut's Environmental justice law. They further suggest that the legislature should allocate funding for a new Council staff member dedicated to supporting public involvement by providing information and responding to inquiries. The legislature should create development of a public participation fund for stakeholders. They share that the Council will limit participation in the stakeholder compensation fund to only affected groups that qualify under the relevant definitions for environmental justice communities. Lastly, they suggest the legislature should direct the council to give guidance to project applicants on providing strict timelines and formal processes for community projects. By improving notice the Siting Council can improve public involvement.

Senator Paul Cicarella 34th & Representative Dave Yaccarino 87th District

Both legislators providing direct general support of SB-144. They share constituent concerns about a proposed telecommunications tower in North Haven. For this reason, many local constituents have expressed frustration that there is no formal local input in siting council decisions. Furthermore, they express that the proposal does not create veto power or obstruct necessary infrastructure or development, but rather improves overall communication and quality of decision making in Siting Council processes.

Representative Martin J. Foncello Jr., 107th District

Representative Foncello, shares increasing concerns on behalf of his constituents that there as been a rapid and widespread expansion of 5g technologies. In his testimony, he shares that there has been an increasing number of requests for tower installations at multiple sites, yet no comprehensive plan or limit regarding number or location. He states that there is lack of local control and residents have reported feeling overlooked, under protected and unrepresented in the decisions that affect their daily lives. Because of this, Rep. Foncello recommends the inclusion of language that Title 16 of the General Statutes be amended requiring that before the CT Siting Council issues a final decisions on any applications to develop a project, a municipal referendum be conducted in each municipality potentially affected by the decisions.

The following people and organizations all expressed their support for the bill SB 144

Matthew W. Hart, Executive Director, Captiol Region Council of Governments

Representative Bill Buckbee, 67th District

Liba H. Fuhman, Former Mayor of New Milford

Samuel S. Gold, Executive Director, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

Cary Lynch, Climate Energy Policy Manager, The Nature Conservancy

Joe Quaranta, President, New Milford Clean Water Coalition

Kimberly Stoner, Director, Advocacy, Northeast Organic Farming Association of CT

53 Citizens express general support for SB 144

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Melanie Bachman, Executive Director, Connecticut Siting Council

Executive Director Bachman states in her testimony that adding non-voting local members to CSC will diminish the municipality's discretionary right to participate in the public hearing process as either party or a limited experience. She offers that Public Act 24-144 taking effect October 1st, 2024 "An Act Concerning Certain Proceedings Relating to Electric Transmission Lines and the Membership and Processes of CSC," had previously covered concerns regarding removing membership restrictions related to former regulators under C.G.S. §16-50, adding the Office of Consumer Counsel for solicitation of comments under C.G.S. §16-50j(g), increasing the municipal consultation period to 90 days under C.G.S. §16-50l(e) & (f), increasing the municipal participation account to \$40,000 under C.G.S. §16-50bb; and expanding the municipal location preferences and criteria for siting under C.G.S. §16-50gg.

Kathleen M. Shanley, Manager, Transmission Siting Eversource Energy

Manager Shanley explains that providing local representation could undermine the Siting Council's ability to effectively balance for public utility services with lowest reasonable costs to customers. She further states that a municipality is entitled to participate in a Siting Council's proceedings by asking interrogatory questions about a proposed facility by submitting testimony, and still have the right to appeal any Siting Council decisions. She further points out that introducing the temporary appointment of "nonvoting" members to a Siting Council representing municipalities where facilities are proposed is not clearly defined in the bill. She further explains that nonvoting representation on the Siting Council, would create ethical dilemmas in that ex parte communications with a Siting Council member or a member of the Siting Council's staff by a party's representative are prohibited by law. She further shares that a conflict of interest would be created for Council attorney-client privileged communications because the nonvoting member would not be allowed to explain or discuss privileged communications with the municipality's chief elected official or any other representative of the municipality. She cites that several municipalities are have no mechanism and no criteria for the appointment of an elector by the applicable regional council of governments for facilities that are proposed to be located in two or more municipalities. Further the bill lacks procedure if a facility were to be located in two or more planning regions.

5 Citizens oppose SB 144

Reported by: Laura Sansur & Luna Romani

Date: 03/12/2026

