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**Bill Number:** 6715

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**House Pages:** 1436-1490

55

**Committee:** None

0

**Page Total:**

68

**S - 580**

**CONNECTICUT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS  
2009**

**VOL. 52  
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1015 - 1350**

rgd  
SENATE

106  
April 14, 2009

Motion is on adoption of Consent Calendar

Number 1.

Total Number Voting	36
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The consent calendar passes. The Senate will stand at ease.

Chamber at ease.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, the next item we'd like to take up is on Senate Agenda Number 1, previously adopted. That is Emergency Certified House Bill Number 6715. Would ask the Clerk to call that item from Senate Agenda Number 1.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Calling from Senate Agenda Number 1, Emergency.

Certified Bill 6715, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN STATE PROGRAMS AND THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009. Bill is accompanied by emergency certification, signed by Christopher G. Donovan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Donald E. Williams Jr., President Pro Tempore of the Senate. The bill is amended by House Amendment Schedule A, which was LCO 5523.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SENATOR HARP:

Thank you, Mr. President. I move the Emergency Certified Bill in concurrence with the house.

THE CHAIR:

Acting on approval, ma'am, would you like to remark further?

SENATOR HARP:

Thank you, Mr. President. This bill implements the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. I'll call it the ARRA in the future.

This bill provides transparency for the \$38.5 million in new federal energy money. Fourteen days prior to submission to the Department of Energy, it requires the secretary of the Office of Policy and

Management to submit its energy federal stimulus funding proposal to the Appropriations and Energy and Technology committees. The department -- the Office of Policy and Management is required to present testimony on the application and it affords public comment.

As well, the bill, basically, allows the state's COBRA law to receive individuals covered by that to receive a 65 percent reduction on their COBRA premiums. It allows persons eligible for Connecticut's mini COBRA law, that is, they work for companies of 20 persons or less, to be eligible for premium assistance in the federal program as of September 1, 2008, rather than February 17, 2009.

For example, if someone were laid off in October and -- or anytime in 2008 and chose not to elect COBRA because the costs for family was \$2,500 per month, under this bill, that person could now elect COBRA and receive a 65 percent reduction. So the family, in this example, would be \$730 per month instead of the \$2,500 per month for up to 9 months. In other words, the bill helps people who lost their job in the five and a half month window.

The bill also revises our unemployment

rgd  
SENATE

109  
April 14, 2009

001134

compensation laws to conform with federal requirements so the state can receive an additional 58.5 million in federal funds, which will help employers in keeping the unemployment compensation fund solvent. It also ensures that individuals receiving increased -- increases in their veterans Social Security or unemployment compensation benefits under the ARRA, do not become ineligible for such benefits due to recipient increases.

With that, sir, that pretty much explains the bill. If you approve, I would like to yield to Senator -- I still yield, because he's done a lot of work on this -- to the Senator from the 17th district. Will you accept the yield, if it's okay with you, sir?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Crisco.

SENATOR CRISCO:

Well, thank you, Mr. President. I accept the yield, and commend Senator Harp for her diligence and helping to get this major legislation approved.

The -- as we all know, COBRA historically has been very expensive for individuals when they leave the company. Even though they may qualify to have COBRA for a year, your talk about premiums of a

rgd  
SENATE

110  
April 14, 2009

thousand, 1500, even \$2,000.

With this outstanding benefit, we make coverage affordable and accessible to many people who do not have insurance coverage and who are unemployed. So I think it's one of the outstanding features of our stimulus package. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, sir. Will you remark further on House Bill 6715? Senator DeBicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, for purposes of legislative intent, questions through you to Senator Harp.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, through you, questions around section 1 of this bill, which would require the Office of Policy and Management to submit its application to the Appropriations and Energy Committee, and for us to have a public hearing before OPM submits that application for the grants to the Department of Energy. Through you, Mr. President, what is the intention of that what we hope to publish

rgd  
SENATE

111  
April 14, 2009

with section 1 of the bill?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SENATOR HARP:

Thank you, Mr. President. It just offers an opportunity for public comment and for us to hear the plans that are going to be presented to the department of energy.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Debicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. So there is nothing in section 1 that would require a vote, or appropriations were energy technology's committee approval to actually make those applications? Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SENATOR HARP:

Thank you. Through you, Mr. President, no.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Debicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. Through you, then,

rgd  
SENATE

112  
April 14, 2009

isn't there the possibility, then, that this process may slow down the application of the grants, which, for my understanding, are competitive grants within the stimulus package. Connecticut is not guaranteed to get them and if we do delay our submission for the grant, is there a possibility that we might be losing out on federal stimulus funds? Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SENATOR HARP:

Thank you, Mr. President, no. If -- it's a requirement that the application come to the committees at least 14 days before the application is submitted. So it's my sense that there's, pretty much, agreement already on what those applications will contain. So I don't believe it will slow anything down.

THE CHAIR:

Senator DeBicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. Through you, then what would be the consequence if the Office of Policy and Management did not submit testimony or did not submit

rgd  
SENATE

113  
April 14, 2009

this to the Appropriations and Energy' Technology  
Committees? What would be the consequences of that?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SENATOR HARP:

Thank you. If this is passed and signed into  
law, they would be breaking the law, sir.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Debicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. Then through you, has  
the appropriations committee broken the law by not  
submitting the recommendations for \$220 million in the  
deficit mitigation that we passed in the third  
mitigation package?

THE CHAIR:

A little noise to the right here. Could you just  
keep it down. If you have business to talk about,  
please take it out of the room. We have debate going  
on. Senator Debicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

I'll repeat the question, then. Is then -- if OPM is breaking the law, if they were not to submit this testimony by May 1st, as is described in the bill, is the Appropriations Committee in violation of the law right now by not having submitted \$220 million in recommendations for sweeps of funds, as was required in the third deficit mitigation package? Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SENATOR HARP:

Thank you. One might assume that, but as long as it comes in time for it to be used, I think it's -- it depends upon your point of view, but yes. One would -- could assume that.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Debicella.

SENATOR DEBICELLA:

Thank you, Mr. President. So our hope would be that OPM would not be in violation of the law, if this were to be passed, but we do need to make sure that when we are passing bills in the Senate, or in the

rgd  
SENATE

115  
April 14, 2009

001140

General Assembly in general, that we ourselves are going to be following the very laws that we pass, not treating them as deadlines that may be waived if we so choose. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, sir. Will you remark further on House Bill 6715? Senator Fonfara.

SENATOR FONFARA:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I'd like to briefly remark on item number 1 in the act, relating to state energy programs. And that is that Connecticut stands to gain from this stimulus initiative about \$38.5 million from the federal government, essentially a -- found money, a windfall opportunity as it relates to energy on behalf of the State of Connecticut.

Sadly, Mr. President, our State, as an official entity is, in my opinion, the worst offender when it comes to being efficient, being smart, when it comes to energy. The Governor has made it widely known, the program of Do One Thing, and yet, the state of Connecticut has not followed its own advice, to do one thing.

Two years ago, this legislature authorized the

rgd  
SENATE

116  
April 14, 2009

State to expend \$30 million to upgrade state buildings here in Connecticut, \$30 million including this building, the Legislative Office Building, the state office building across the street. And if any of you ever drive by there or walk by that building, you will see the most inefficient way to cool a building, window air conditioning in that massive structure. We pay, and Connecticut taxpayers pay for that everyday.

It is my hope, Mr. President, that when Connecticut receives these dollars in the coming months, that the program that will be designed by OPM, the very body that was asked to implement the \$30 million over the last two years, and by the way, not one dime has ever been asked by the administration -- not one dime has ever been asked to be put on the bond commission agenda to be expended on behalf of energy conservation for state buildings in the last two years, not one dime.

So I'm hopeful, I remain hopeful that despite that track record, that we will be smarter, that the administration will be more interested in bringing state buildings into line with what so many businesses in the state, and so many homeowners in the state have done on their own with their own dollars, done more

rgd  
SENATE

117  
April 14, 2009

001142

than one thing, done several things to reduce their energy costs. And we ask them to do more, while we haven't done our part. I hope that when this proposal is brought before the Appropriations and Energy Committee, that it will represent an honest and committed effort to bringing our buildings, not just into line with others, but to be a leader and how we can be an energy smart administration, an energy smart government, so that the people of our state will benefit from that, not only from their wallets, but in terms of how we can do things in the state and we have a lot of things that are here; people employed in this business, and this state, people who have good ideas, technologies that are smart, efficient, environmentally beneficial and economically viable. We have it here -- we're the fuel-cell creator in the state. We have a number of other smart people who can do these things and we, as a state government, ought to be leading the way, not dragging down the rear. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark further on House Bill 6715? If not, Mr. Clerk, please call for a roll call vote. The machine will be open.

rgd  
SENATE

118  
April 14, 2009

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the chamber. Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the chamber.

THE CHAIR:

Have all Senators voted? Let's go. If all Senators voted, the machine will be locked. The Clerk will call the tally.

THE CLERK:

The motion is on passage of Emergency Certified Bill 6715, as amended by House Amendment Schedule A.

Total Number Voting	36
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	1
Those absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The bill as amended passes. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, would move for immediate transmittal of the last acted upon Emergency Certified House bill 6715 to the Governor.

**H – 1041**

**CONNECTICUT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS  
2009**

**VOL.52  
PART 5  
1290 – 1608**

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? If all the members voted, please check the machine and make sure your vote has been properly cast. If all the members voted, please check the board to determine if your vote has been properly cast. If all members have voted, the machine will be locked. And the Clerk will please take a tally. Will the Clerk please announce the tally?

THE CLERK:

House bill 6462 as amended by House Amendment  
Schedule A.

Total Number Voting	144
Necessary for Passage	73
Those voting Yea	144
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	7

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The bill as amended is passed.

Will the Clerk please call Emergency Certified  
Bill Number 6715.

THE CLERK:

House Bill Number 6715, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN  
STATE PROGRAMS AND THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND

rgd/med  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

115  
April 7, 2009

REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009, LCO Number 5509, introduced  
by Representative Donovan and Senator Williams.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Good afternoon, Representative.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

I move acceptance and passage of the emergency  
certified bill.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Question is on passage of the bill. Will you  
remark?

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bill basically has  
four sections dealing with the federal stimulus  
dollars, and I'll briefly explain those. Section 1  
deals with energy funds and creating an accountable  
and transparent process for the application of those  
funds. From the committees of cognizance, the second  
section deals with health insurance issues and  
especially COBRA. The third section deals with  
unemployment benefits and the standards and

rgd/med  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

116  
April 7, 2009

qualifications as under this act. And the last section deals with income limits for individuals receiving stimulus dollars and basically preserves their qualifications for state and local benefits such as tax credits and other types of state assistance. The Clerk has an amendment, LCO 5523. May he call and I be permitted to summarize?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Will be Clerk please call LCO 5523, which will be designated House Amendment Schedule A.

THE CLERK:

LCO number 5523, House A offered by Representative Geragosian.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize the agreement -- to summarize the amendment. Is there objection to summarization? Hearing none, you may proceed with summarization.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This amendment strikes Section 1, and basically makes one change that relates to the date of OPM's application. It gives OPM a little bit more leeway when they submit their plan to the committees. Instead of May 1, is it really --

before May 1 is in the original legislation. It gives them 14 days from submission, and I move adoption.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Question before the Chamber is adoption of House Amendment Schedule A. Will you remark on the amendment? Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I might, just a question or two to the proponent of the amendment.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Please proceed.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Trying to help my leader out. Mr. Chairman, as the gentleman explained, the language changes that it requires at least 14 days prior to OPM submitting the application to the federal government, as I understand it, that would have to be submitted to the committees of cognizance. Is that correct? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

That's right, through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, as I understand the underlying bill, should the amendment not be successful, there was no such requirement that that information be submitted to the committees of cognizance, merely that they would have to be notified upon submission. Is that correct? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, that's not exactly true. In line six of the original legislation, it says -- set off -- shall submit a detailed, comprehensive application to the joint standing committees of cognizance and then allow for a public hearing process thereafter.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I read the bill and the amendment, I don't think there's anything in here that would prohibit the Governor from

submitting the application to the federal government prior to the public hearing running its course. Am I misreading something? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Well, through you, Mr. Speaker, it says 14 days prior to submission, so that would indicate that it would be prior to the submission to the federal government. How that would be noticed is a question that I -- even I had myself. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to get at here is there has been an explanation of this amendment in that it is going to provide 14 days notice, I guess, it's to the General assembly, for a process that, as I understand the federal law, isn't even required. The good gentleman explained that under the underlying law, that submission could not occur later than May 1st, and under the amendment there's no mention of May 1st. So theoretically, as

long as it's 14 days prior to the submission to the federal government, that's acceptable. Am I correct with that assumption? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can you repeat that question? There's a little bit of noise over here. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you. Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the underlying bill, the requirement is that the submission be not later than May 1st. And in the amendment, that language with regard to the submission by OPM to the committees of cognizance, the General Assembly having cognizance over appropriations and energy, would be 14 days before it's submitted to the federal government. So the May 1st date goes away, as I understand the amendment, but there is still a requirement that the Governor's office not submit that information to the federal government prior to notifying these committees of cognizance. Is that correct? Through you, Mr.

Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

It's my understanding, through you, Mr. Speaker, that May 15th is the deadline for this particular grant but, it also gives OPM a little bit more leeway as I see it, as we discussed prior to this coming up. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the leeway, I'm trying to understand the leeway, through you, Mr. Speaker. Under current federal law, I believe the Governor has the authority to make the submission. What I understand of the process doesn't require any governor in the country to submit this to their general assembly, but in Connecticut, that's apparently what we're going to do. The amendment moves the date up by 14 days, as I understand the gentleman, to allow a public hearing process so that we don't back into being late with our application. Is that correct? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, that's true.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the gentleman for his answers. In terms of this process, is there some vision that the OPM and Governor's office would be making a submission to the federal government that's inconsistent with the state's interests? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I think it's, as I said in my opening remarks, I think it's just the question of us having to have some accountability over the funds and take a look at what -- it's about \$38 million to my understanding, and make sure that we're -- take a look at where -- spending the money on and have a more transparent process. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

rgd/med  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

123  
April 7, 2009

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those are all the questions that I have on the amendment. I may wait and ask a few more questions about this transparency thing as the bill moves forward. Thank you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Will you mark further on the amendment before us?

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker a few questions, through you, to Representative Geragosian.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Please proceed.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Representative Geragosian, forgive me because I was focused on -- in the same area as Representative Miner, and I don't quite know if I'm clear on it yet. And I guess, the amendment differs from the underlying bill in two ways. And please correct me if I'm incorrect. Through you, Mr. Speaker, one is it adds 14 days, so it quantifies the amount of days prior,

which the other amendment didn't that it must be submitted, but it takes away a May 1st date. Is that accurate? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you. Through you, Mr. Speaker, is there any, to your knowledge, for the submission of this application, is there an ultimate date deadline? And forgive me if you -- if that's been asked and answered. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

I believe, through you, Mr. Speaker, I believe the deadline is May 15th. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

The deadline is May 15th.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

I believe that's true, sir.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Okay. And through you, Mr. Speaker, does this amendment anticipate that upon receipt of the application for review, if after a public hearing by the General Assembly -- first of all, let me go backwards. Does this require the committees of cognizance to hold a public hearing? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, it does. You'll see the -- in line 12, it says said committee shall hold a subject matter public hearing on such detailed comprehensive application. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you. Through you, Mr. Speaker, if it's in the -- well, if after the public hearing, is there any other requirement by the committee? In other words, do they need to have a committee meeting after that

public hearing or any such thing or a vote on anything? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, the language before us in this amendment, in the underlying bill does not require that as I see it. Any -- does not require any action of the committees of cognizance or the Legislature as a whole. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you. Does it prohibit any act by that committee after the public hearing? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker it doesn't explicitly prohibit that, but I don't see what the mechanism would possibly be to take any action on such an application without a entire new act of some sort. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Well, I guess, through you, Mr. Speaker, that's the essence of my question: Why are we doing this? In other words the law requires -- the federal law requires the Governor to make a submission of an application by, according to you, May 15th. This bill says, Governor, before you do that, at least 14 days before you do that, you got to give it to us first for -- to look at. And once we look at it, within seven days of getting it, we have to have a public hearing. And I presume, based on your comments earlier, that that means that we're going to look at it and say we like it. We might disagree with the way the application reads. We might have feelings about it, and if we were to have feelings about it, the committee, what could they do about it, I guess is my question? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, this amendment does exactly what it says it does. It allows the committees

of cognizance to have a public hearing. I assume in the future some sort of legislation could be proposed go further, but that's not what we're doing here today. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, certainly, I have absolutely no problem. In fact, I think it is good government for the Governor simultaneously upon -- or at some point when you file an application with a federal government, to make darn sure the legislative branch knows what you're filing. I think that's a good thing, and I think this amendment provides for it. However, it provides for it within a time limit, and it implies that it's 14 days before the submission in case we want to change it, or we don't like it, or we want to comment on it. And yet, the amendment seems incomplete as to, one, how we would do that, and it -- and what I'm not clear about is even if we wanted to do that, could we do that, or would it be in contravention of federal law?

See, I guess what I don't understand is since the underline -- since the amendment doesn't provide for

any mechanism for us as a Legislature to do anything other than requiring the Governor to give us a copy of it before she submits, what's the magic about 14 days in the public hearing? If even after a public hearing there's nothing we can do about it, I guess, that's what I'm missing here. And I'm trying to understand why this is in -- seems like an extra step that's unneeded, unnecessary or that wouldn't work. Through you, Mr. Speaker, am I reading that wrong?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Well, I -- through you, Mr. Speaker, I think the date issue we get away from putting in a date certain because, say, for instance the Governor were to submit the application on May 7th rather than May 15. It would give us the leeway to do due diligence and to look at -- I mean, the appropriations committee hears about grants, federal grants coming in. We have hearings on different grants. We had one on the waivers, some of which require approval.

Some of them don't -- we can't necessarily change. This allows our input. It allows public testimony and testimony from the affected groups,

especially in the area of energy, energy efficiency -- very technical subjects. It's good for us as a General Assembly and the committees of cognizance to listen to details about the best way to spend these funds. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, once again, I understand the concept, that makes logical sense. That before you submit this application we want to see it, because we might not like it or we might have some comment, or we might have some idea. And we want to see it in plenty of time to be able to digest that, in fact, 14 days before. And we're so serious about our right to look this over and comment on it, we're saying that, within seven days of us getting it, we're going to have a public hearing. And then the next logical thing would be, and then we're going to blank. But there is no blank. There's nothing here. It doesn't say we can do anything. It doesn't say we should to anything. It doesn't even say what the purpose of the public hearing is, other than to hear the application. So I guess, I don't understand why

we're doing it.

And I also think what happened is the federal government believed that the Governor was in the best position for purposes of timing, for purposes of quickness of response. The Governor was in the best position to file this application and carry through on it. And what we're saying is, Governor, you better have that application ready 14 days before you file it because we want to see it. And not only do we want to see it, we want to have a public hearing on it. And if we don't like it, we can't do anything about it. Now that's what I'm not getting. So unless I'm wrong, and I can stand corrected -- well, let me ask you, am I accurate in that assessment that we can't do anything about the application being submitted by the Governor, regardless of how many days in advance of her submission we require her to give us a copy of it and regardless of how many public hearings we have once we've received a copy of it? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'll concede to your

point that this bill currently is blankless in that area. But I assume this -- the General Assembly could take further action down the line, as I said. But it does one other thing. It makes the Office of Policy and Management come to that public hearing and discuss its rationale for the application and answer questions about the application.

Also, you know, we negotiate with the executive branch all the time as it relates to legislation and applications for grants and the like. So there's an opportunity to maybe make some changes perhaps, but there's nothing formal in terms of final action through the General Assembly or the committees of cognizance. This is what it is at this present time. And I hope that answers your question, through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I guess it does answer my questions, sir, and I appreciate that. But it still leaves a question, for what? You know, we have heard over the last several months what is almost cliché and almost numbing about the seriousness of the

crisis we're in. We've heard about the federal government's response thereto, that we have to quickly get money, make money available to get this economy moving again. So it is with great caution, I would suggest, that we interject ourselves into that process for fear of slowing down the process or thwarting that process.

So when we do inject ourselves into this process as we are doing by this amendment and the underlying bill, we better have a good reason why. And thus far the only reason I'm told is "cuz." Because there's nothing else we can do but learn about it. So I have no objection with requiring that the Governor give us a copy of what she is making application for. That's certainly only logical that she is gives it, at least, simultaneously with her making that application. But unless I understand why we need it in advance, unless there's something we can do about it, then I don't understand why we have this 14-day limit.

And my concern is you might say, well then, what's the harm? Well, I don't know the harm, because if we delay getting money for some odd reason or if the application needs to be amended quickly, let's say on 7 days before May 15th as opposed to 14 days. Does

that preclude the Governor from submitting it because she would be in violation of this statute? If information came to the Governor 10 days before May 15th that needed to be incorporated in the application to get this money, because it's not within 14 days she would be giving us a copy, does that put the Governor in violation of the law? Is that what we want to do? Would she have to delay submitting the application to pass May 15th to comply with that 14-day period, thereby jeopardizing the money?

We are a coequal and separate branch of government, and I'm very cognizant and proud of that. There are certain things however, that are left either by our own laws of this state or by federal law to our executive branch. This particular emergency measure and measures is one of those, so I don't want to inject ourselves as a legislative branch in the process if it would jeopardize the very reason it's been given the power, if you will, or the responsibility has been given to the executive branch to begin with. So I remain mystified as to the purpose of this amendment or the underlying bill, Section 1, for what? To say we better give us a copy of that darn thing 14 days, and boy, we better have

it. And if we don't, well, I don't know what. We'll come back and discuss that later -- dangerous stuff when we're talking about money to stimulate this economy. That's my concern. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you, Representative. Remark further on the amendment before us? Representative Merrill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just briefly, to some degree in response to what we've been listening to about this amendment, and the question is about why we think we need to have some legislative information about any plan that gets submitted. I think it's important to know, and what we found out as leaders when we visited Washington a few weeks ago, is that it is extremely important that the State apply appropriately for many of these grants. And this is the one in question today, is the energy grant. This involves some \$38.5 million that will come to the State of Connecticut after the Governor submits an application.

Now, what we found was that in many states, governors cannot simply appropriate money without any action by the Legislature. As a matter of fact, in

most states, it is a constitutional requirement that the Legislature participate in any appropriating of funds. This is an extraordinary circumstance certainly, and that is that we are trying to get the money out in a way that will help our economy immediately. And there was, I think, a legitimate fear in Washington, that should the stimulus dollars be bogged down in a legislative process, that it would delay the implementation of these very important grants. But we have also seen in Connecticut, in this particular instance, where this kind of money is -- can be appropriated for a broad range of programs. And while we are very respectful of Congress' and the President's need to get this money out quickly, it's also important that we all understand, including the public what these dollars are available to do and, actually, to at least be able to see that the application is going in appropriately and maybe be able to offer opinions.

There's nothing in this that restricts us from being able to offer advice, recommendations or opinions on the plan that is produced by the administration. And to ensure that we actually are applying appropriately for the dollars, it's very

difficult, because we have had very little information about how these processes are proceeding. So, I think, in a very respectful way, which does not in any way preclude the administration for applying for these very important dollars, we have at least had the opportunity to see what the plan will involve and what kind of projects and programs are contemplated. So I think it should be seen in that spirit of a way for us to, at least, get some transparency to the process, but also to honor the process that was put in place for these extremely important dollars for the state of Connecticut.

So with that I would urge you all to support the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you, Representative. Representative Esty.

REP. ESTY (103rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the amendment, having read the 40 pages of that Department of Energy regulations. There are important reasons why we should support this amendment. There's a deadline of May 15th. As part of that application, the Governor must certify to leave intact all of our present programs for clean energy and energy

efficiency.

The Governor has three times sought to raid those taxpayer funds. Under the federal stimulus law, that cannot be done. I, for one, want to ensure that the plan, as submitted, does not raid those funds. Last week when Mr. Genuario came before the Appropriations Committee, \$80 million is still earmarked in her budget to be raided. That would be in violation of the clear intent and the clear rules from the Department of Energy. It is very important we are -- ensure that this is in compliance, and to date, the applications suggests she will be, but her actions do not.

Beyond that, it is important for us to have the opportunity to ensure that we have a chance to adjust our budget, which we can depending on how she uses these funds. So I think that it is valuable to us to have that information in hand even if we -- she doesn't adjust it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you, Representative. Remark further on the amendment before us? Remark further on the amendment before us? If not, I will try your minds. All those in favor, please signify by saying, aye.

rgd/med  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

139  
April 7, 2009

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

All those opposed, nay.

The ayes have it. The amendment is adopted.

Remark further on the bill as amended? Remark further  
on the bill as amended? Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, Mr. Speaker  
I have some questions to the proponent of the bill.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Please proceed.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you. Representative Geragosian, last week  
I received a letter from my insurance company telling  
me about the federal law that has been enacted in  
reference to COBRA.

I'm sorry. I thought Representative Geragosian  
was asking me to wait for a second. I'm going to  
repeat the question. I'll start the question again if  
I may Mr. Speaker.

Last week, I received from my insurance company a  
letter detailing the fact that the federal government  
has put through a new policy and procedures for COBRA.

rgd/med  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

140  
April 7, 2009

And that policy and procedure for COBRA says that 65 of the COBRA payment should be made by the company, and then the 35 will be, obviously, by the federal government. And the letter continued to say that the employer would eventually receive credit in Social Security and Medicare taxes, which means to me the employer would be putting that money up front, paying it, and the only way for them to receive any compensation would be simply by tax credits for Social Security and Medicare taxes. How would this relate to this bill that we are introducing? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to yield to Representative Fontana, Chairman of the Insurance Committee for that answer.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Actually Representative, you don't have the floor right now. Representative Noujaim, would you like to direct your question to Representative Fontana?

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I accept the yield from

Mr. Fontana.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fontana.

REP. FONTANA (87th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, I intended to address Section 2 of the bill in greater detail in the coming moments, but I'd be happy to enter -- answer the gentleman's question now. His question, I believe, where is the 65 percent reimbursement or credit coming from? And according to information I have from the Department of Health and Human Services, the 65 percent will be reimbursed to the coverage provider through a tax credit from the federal government. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, if I continue asking Representative Fontana several questions and reference to this very same line. From what I understand is that the federal government will be reimbursing the employer through tax credits, which mean the employer must, up front, pay those amounts of money on a weekly basis or a monthly basis, whatever

the case might apply, but then the only time they are going to be seeing any benefits from this if -- is if they have tax credits. Am I correct? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fontana.

REP. FONTANA (87th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I don't have details on the payment schedule of the credit. I would assume the credit is provided at the appropriate time when the company or entity files its corporate income tax returns. I don't know if that's helpful. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and that leads me to my next question. Let us say, as a theory, the company will file its income tax. And the company, especially during these economic conditions, is not making any profit, either on a break-even point or they are essentially reporting a deficit. In this case, what would the company be entitled to receive, seeing that credit is only applied for profits rather than deficit

or surplus? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fontana.

REP. FONTANA (87th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I can't speak to the financial health of companies that would choose to participate or not participate. I think, as a matter of policy, what we're doing is making companies eligible and, by extension, their former employees eligible. We understand that they are a number of hurdles to overcome before employees may receive these COBRA benefits. But nevertheless, we're setting a process by which those employees who were laid off over a five and a half month period may end up getting significant COBRA assistance for up to nine months. Through you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that leads me also, to my next question, if I may. Mr. Speaker, I am the plan administrator for the small company that I work for. For an average health insurance plan for a family, we pay about \$1400 a month, just an average.

So if an employee is terminated involuntarily, the company will have to pay 65 percent up front -- up front of that \$1400 per month. And to me, 65 percent of \$1400 is somewhere about 8, 900 dollars or so.

So the company is going to put 800 to 900 dollars per employee who is terminated involuntarily. And then, during these economic conditions, what are the benefits that the company is going to be receiving? I realize that in order for us to receive stimulus money from the federal government, this bill has to pass. But I want to make sure that this bill does not pass at the shoulders of employers, who as of now, cannot even afford to pay their employees, not so much to pay for COBRA. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fontana.

REP. FONTANA (87th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, the impact or the cost borne by an employer will be wholly dependent upon the number of former employees, if any, who seek to elect for these COBRA benefits. So it's not clear that any company will actually spend one dollar upfront, after the fact, or in the midst as a result of this bill.

No system was perfect, but we've come up with a

system which we believe will give thousands, if not tens of thousands of Connecticut workers, access to reduced health care costs premiums, which when they're losing their jobs is when they need the health care the most. Through you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And through you, Mr. Speaker, I may debate this point, because I'm not speaking from theory in here, I'm speaking from practice. Unfortunately, due to bad economic situations, right now, in the small company I work for, we have three employees who were laid off. I hated like heck to do it. I never wanted to do it, but yet the fact is the fact. There are three employees to whom we already sent, we already sent them certified letters indicating that they may be eligible for this COBRA plan. So three employees, three families, \$800 a month, \$2,400 per month for the three employees.

So essentially, what Representative Fontana is saying, is that there is no evidence that any company will be paying anything. I am proving evidence right

now, that right now we would be paying it if this bill passes. So what kind of remedy could I have on this? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fontana.

REP. FONTANA (87th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I didn't say that there was no evidence that this would not have any impact. And, in fact, we hope that there will be hundreds if not thousands or tens of thousands of Connecticut people who take advantage of this ideal -- ideally.

It's merely a mechanism, Mr. Speaker, to leverage federal dollars so that Connecticut workers have access to health care for themselves and their families at this difficult time for up to nine months. Through you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy and pleased, through you, to accept federal dollars and get stimulus money. But the fact of the matter is the stimulus dollars coming to the State of Connecticut, I don't know where they would be applied, whether in the

general fund or any special accounts, but yet employers are going to be paying the cost of those COBRAs. So how can this be rectified? The state is receiving the money, the employers are paying for it and yet, the employers are being left out of the cold. I would like to have an explanation of this, through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fontana.

REP. FONTANA (87th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, this is a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. We cannot amend the federal law. We cannot importune our Legislators in the federal level to change the law. All we could do is change our laws to comply with it or not. I'm pleased to say that the Governor herself wrote to the chairs of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee along with her legislative leaders and asked us to consider just this provision. And I'm pleased that we're taking this action today at her suggestion to implement it. It's not perfect, but we have a choice, Mr. Speaker, we always have a choice. Do we embrace it or do we reject it? I come down in favor of embracing it. Through you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker a point of order, if I may. And I don't know the rules, and I will ask Representative Fontana for his advice on this. Would I be able to offer a friendly amendment, so that all of the money that employers are paying, that 65 percent will be -- they will be able to apply to the state to receive that money back, rather than having the money go from the federal government directly to the general fund? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fontana.

REP. FONTANA (87th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, at this point no. I would characterize that as an unfriendly amendment, and I would urge my colleague not to offer an amendment for that purpose, because according to the frequently asked questions provided again, from the Department of Health and Human Services, the tax credit is not -- let's see if I can find the exact language. The employer or group of health plan cannot receive the tax credit under the state program, so

there is no state component to this in terms of the funding. The funding is purely federal. It does not relate in any way to state funding, state tax statutes, so I would urge my colleague not to offer that, and I would characterize it as an unfriendly amendment. Through you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may I move and I -- for the time, I'm accepting Representative Fontana's point of view. I'd like to move forth to have some other questions to ask. And I believe, now, this will be going to the Chair of the Appropriations Committee because they are not financially related. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Please proceed.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker I am looking at line 35 to 39, talking about the General Statutes shall in conjunction with their group policyholders that are employers with fewer than 20 employees, provide notice no later than April 18, 2009 of the election period

set forth in the subsection, and it continues. What is the reason for saying, employers with fewer than 20 employees? Are we restricting this bill to small companies, or it's going to be encompassing everyone throughout the state of Connecticut? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, that provision applies to state COBRA, the 20 or less. And the federal COBRA applies to companies that are larger. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does this mean, through you, that this bill, as we are discussing it right now, only applies for companies that have 20 employees or less, and that's it? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you. And through you, Mr. Speaker, is this bill -- does this bill apply to companies that have 20 employees or less who are participating in a health plan or companies that have 20 employees or less, period? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker I believe it's every company that offers health insurance. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And through you, Mr. Speaker, I understand that. But the question is, is it for a company that has 20 employees, 20 employees or less in the health plan, enrolled in the health plan, because some employees may not take a health plan. Some employees may be husband and wife working for the same company, and therefore, only one of them

is covered and the other comes in as a dependent. So my question is, is this bill intended for companies who have 20 employees or less, period, or companies who have 20 employees or less enrolled in the health plan? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I think it has to be companies of 20 or less. Through your example, as I understand it, you can have a company of 20 employees, say, or 19 employees and only 15 are covered. Is that where your question is getting at? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. We're putting you to work this afternoon.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

That's okay. It's my job.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

But the question is, yes. Is it 20 employees who have health insurance plan, or 20 employees who are

just employed full-time employees by the company?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I under -- it's my understanding it's less than 20 employees total, regardless of how many employees are covered under the plan. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the answer, and this is very, you know, very clear to me. I have a couple more questions, if I may.

In lines 118 to 123, the bill says, in the opinion of the administrator, the individual has been discharged or suspended for felonious conduct and willful misconduct, and all of this. So if we -- if an employee is terminated, and he or she applies for this COBRA, the company is paying that amount up front, but the employee ends up appealing the decision to be terminated. And later on, a year down the road, because our laws allow an employee to apply for unemployment, and if he is denied, apply again -- ask

for a decision by the board. And if he is denied, is capable again to have a motion to reopen, and that can drag for up to a year, to one year.

So let us say a company is paying all of this for nine months, and then later on, the board finds the employee to be eligible. How would the company be reimbursed of this money? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, on the issue of COBRA, to the Representative from Waterbury, it's not a company, like your company paying for the COBRA cost, for instance, as I understand it. It's the insurance company covering those costs and the insurance company getting the credit. So it's the insurance company that would have to be made whole with the 65 percent credit. As to the issue of an employee that received certain benefits under unreasonable -- for an unreasonable reason, that employee would be responsible for making the company whole. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have the document with me, which I downloaded. And this is the document that came from the federal government. And it says in here, requires employers to pay the 65 percent portion up front, and then allows them to deduct those costs from their Social Security and Medicare taxes. With all my respect to the Chairman of the Appropriation Committee, here it is, and this is a federal government document. So the employers are paying for it. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, could you repeat your question sir?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a document that I received from the federal government, and I am waiting to take it in and give it, with your permission, to Representative Geragosian. And basically it says, requires employers to pay the 65

percent portion up front, and then allows them to deduct those costs from their Social Security and Medicare taxes. So clearly, the federal government clause -- are saying the employers are paying it, not the insurance company.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, would not -- did -- not be paid through their health insurance costs and their premiums. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All that it says, requires employers to pay. I, from what I understand through my insurance company is when they sign up for COBRA, the company will be paying the 65 percent. And that's what I was told by the insurance company, and it's evident by the document that came from the federal government. So the company is paying that money up front. And here it is, black and white. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding the employee pays the COBRA premiums, and that they're only responsible for the 35 percent and the remainder is credited to the insurance company. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you. Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Chamber to be at ease for a second so I can take this document to Representative Geragosian. I mean, it's black and white. I have it in here in writing. And it says, the employer is required to pay the 65 percent. It's a government document.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative, do you want to yield the floor? You can certainly bring the document over.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Now that's --

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative, hold on.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

We can ask Representative Fontana to try to take a stab at this, through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim, you want to direct your question to Representative Fontana? He's going to try to take, as the Representative said, a stab at the question.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you. Representative Fontana, in the document that I have here from the federal government, it states very, very clearly that, requires employers to pay the 65 percent portion up front and then allows them to deduct those costs from their Social Security and Medicare taxes, end of quote. Basically your statement, Representative Fontana, was correct, that the employer will pay that money and then they will be able to take it in tax credits.

So the companies who are going to be obligated to pay this must pay up front, unless I am reading this sentence wrong. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fontana.

REP. FONTANA (87th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank

rgd/med  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

159  
April 7, 2009

Representative Geragosian for trying to answer these questions. The issue is one of the design of the COBRA program itself. Except for a small administrative charge, employers pay no costs of COBRA. Now we can debate whether or not the federal government should have made it a tax credit if businesses will end up getting back later this year or next April or whatever. We would probably all prefer if the federal government came to Connecticut and handed each one of us a check. That would be great. That's just not the way it works. They designed something to ensure that employers will not end up paying out of pocket net costs. Unfortunately, it may take a few months for those costs to return, but the fact is the employer will not be paying, just as they do not pay now under COBRA currently. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to Representative -- the representative's comment. Yes, the federal government is giving the State of Connecticut a check. And that check is going to

wherever the State of Connecticut allocates it and where it sees fit. However, the bottom line remains the same that the employers are paying that 65 percent up front, whether we put this bill in place or we don't put this bill in place.

If we do not vote on this bill, then we do not receive the money. If we vote yes on this bill we will receive the money, put it in the general fund, and then the employers must pay 65 percent of the COBRA. It's black-and-white. It's very clear. So I will continue with my questions. I will leave this for a moment and I will come back to it. Through you, Mr. Speaker, if I may.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you, Representative. Remark further on the bill as --

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Mr. Speaker, may I still keep the floor?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you. I have a couple more questions, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Okay. Please proceed.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Representative Geragosian, in line 235 to 237, and this is only a question of curiosity, it simply talks about the type of medical coverage and the functions that perform this coverage, and then it says, Christian Science practitioners listed with the First Church of Christ Scientists in Boston Massachusetts. May I ask for an explanation of this sentence? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I assume it's exemption for religious purposes. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Noujaim.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the answers. I appreciate you tolerating me too, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you, Representative. Remark further on the bill as amended? Representative Hamzy.

REP. HAMZY (78th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to pose a couple questions to the proponent of the bill.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Please proceed.

REP. HAMZY (78th):

Mr. Speaker, earlier in response to questions on the amendment, there were some dates that were thrown out with regard to deadlines for when applications are required to be filed by the Governor for stimulus money for, I believe energy assistance. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the Representative from New Britain clarify what that date is?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the deadline for the comprehensive plan is May 15th of this year. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Hamzy.

REP. HAMZY (78th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the reason why I asked that is that we were provided information that

the deadline was May 12th. And I wasn't sure which one was accurate. But the reason why I ask is it would impact the time frames that are required as part of the bill now as amended, because I don't know when the Senate is scheduled to go into session. I don't believe before next Tuesday, which would make it April 14th.

And then, you know, by the time this bill, as amended, works its way through the process, I don't know that the time frames that are required in the bill, as amended, are going to be physically be able to be met. And it's the -- and I just raise that as an issue of concern.

The other question I had was this being an E-Cert, apparently did not have a public hearing. Through you, Mr. Speaker, did any portion of this E-cert bill have a public hearing?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, no. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Hamzy..

REP. HAMZY (78th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, Mr. Speaker, other than the provisions contained in Section 1, is there any -- are there any changes made in here that go above and beyond what the federal government is requiring in order to be eligible to make application for these funds.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I believe the only section would be Section 4, which holds recipients of state and local benefits harmless as it relates to income or asset provisions. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Hamzy.

REP. HAMZY (78th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also my understanding that, obviously there's changes to be made for the purpose of accepting the federal money, and to that end, we have expanded some eligibility requirements, specifically with regard to unemployment. Through you, Mr. Speaker, is that accurate?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragoşian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. HAMZY (78th):

And through you, Mr. Speaker --

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Hamzy.

REP. HAMZY (78th):

Thank you. Through you, Mr. Speaker, the changes that are being proposed to expand the unemployment comp eligibility, are they scheduled to be sunsetted or are they designed to be permanent?

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, my understanding is you have to make permanent changes to your law in order to receive this sum, up to 58 million, I think, that we're supposed to receive. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Hamzy.

REP. HAMZY (78th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And do you know, are we then barred from making any changes to eligibility that would narrow the scope of eligibility requirements after the federal stimulus money is spent? Through you, Mr. Speaker -- or I'm sorry, appropriated to the state? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Geragosian.

REP. GERAGOSIAN (25th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge it would -- well, first of all it would depend what provisions, but to my knowledge, changes could not be made after that point. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Hamzy.

REP. HAMZY (78th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank Representative Geragosian for his responses. And I guess, one of the concerns that I have with regard to some of the strings that are attached to the stimulus money is that, for my understanding, and I don't think that it's crystal clear by any stretch of the imagination -- I'm not sure everyone understands the ramifications of the stimulus bill to this point,

which I believe, in and of itself is an issue. But the fact that we are bound by accepting this short-term -- these short-term funds that we will not be able to make longer changes in the long-term to these types of programs that the State has created, I think is very troublesome.

And it's something I'm concerned about is, while we are taking this money to fix a short-term problem, do we now create longer-term issues that the federal government will not subsidize or share in the cost of in the future? And that's a very real concern, and I believe that's why there are several states that have refused or declined to take some of the stimulus money that has been offered through this -- through the federal government. And I'm still not sure how I'm going to vote on this, Mr. Speaker. But I appreciate the responses given. Thank you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you, Representative. Remark further on the bill as amended? Remark further on the bill as amended? If not, staff and guests come to the well of the House. Members take their seats. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber. Members to the chamber. The House is taking a roll call vote.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Will the members please check the board and make sure your vote has been properly cast. If all the members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will please take a tally. Will be Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 6715 as amended by House A.

Total Number Voting 146

Necessary for Passage 74

Those voting Yea 136

Those voting Nay 10

Those absent and not voting 5

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The bill as amended is passed.

The Clerk please call Calendar 114.

THE CLERK:

On page 5, Calendar 140, House Bill Number 6351,  
AN ACT CONCERNING THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONERS'  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TECHNICAL REVISIONS TO THE HUMAN