

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 14-218

SB426

House	6728, 6733-6736	5
Senate	2435-2447	13
Public Safety	490-518, 524-534, 643- <u>672, 711-719</u>	79
		97

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL.57
PART 20
6540 – 6911**

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The question is moving this item to the Consent Calendar with Senate "A." Is there objection?

Hearing none, so ordered.

Mr. Clerk, 450.

THE CLERK:

House Calendar 450, Favorable Report of the joint standing Committee on Government Administration and Elections, Substitute Senate Bill 70, AN ACT CONCERNING THE GRANT OF PROPERTY INTERESTS IN PROPERTY HELD BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PUBLIC USE AND BENEFITS LAND REGISTRY.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Aresimowicz.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Mr. Speaker, I move the following items to the Consent Calendar as amended by Senate "C."

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The question is on putting this on the Consent Calendar as amended by Senate "C." Is there objection?

Hearing none, so ordered.

Three-twenty-six; Mr. Clerk.

506 from the Consent Calendar, please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

506 is removed from the Consent Calendar.

Representative Aresimowicz.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remove Calendar 508 from the Consent Calendar, please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Calendar 508 is removed from the Consent Calendar.

SB72

Mr. Clerk, would you kindly call the Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

Mr. Speaker, Consent Calendar Number 1, consisting of Calendar Numbers 548; 512, as amended by Senate "A"; 450, as amended by Senate "C"; 236, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 425; Calendar 518, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 452; Calendar 511; Calendar 5 -- excuse me -- 458; Calendar 491; Calendar 467; Calendar 468; item under suspension, 535; Senate Bill 00114, as considered under suspension; Senate Bill 417, suspension; Calendar Number 537, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 498; Calendar 499, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 508; and, House Bill -- what

SB176
SB179
SB70
SB247
SB271
SB426
SB154
SB155
SB262
SB456
SB463
SB493
SB114
SB417
SB269
SB309
HB5312

is it? Is off -- excuse me -- and House Bill 5312,
which was done under suspension with Senate "A" and
"B."

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Just -- just for my own clarification, was --
that was 326 not 236?

THE CLERK:

Three-two-six.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, sir.

Representative Aresimowicz, what's your pleasure
on today's Consent Calendar?

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move passage of the bills on
today's Consent.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Question is on passage of the bills on the
Consent Calendar.

Staff and guests please come to the well of the
House. Members take their seat. The machine will be
open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll, by --
on today's first Consent Calendar. Will members
please report to the Chamber immediately.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Have all the members voted?

Ladies and gentlemen, before I call for the
machine being locked, I need to note that the board is
not completely in line with the motion. Calendar 520
"A," which unfortunately is up on the board, was --
there was no motion to put that on the Consent
Calendar. Unless there's objection, we'll just fix it
ministerially and proceed on. Is there any objection
to that solution?

Thank you all.

If all the -- if everyone has voted, the machine
will be locked. Clerk will take a tally.

And the Clerk will announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Consent Calendar Number 1.

Total Number Voting	148
Necessary for Passage	75
Those voting Yea	148
Those voting Nay	0

Those absent and not voting 3

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The Consent Calendar as moved, the bills on it
are passed.

And now, Mr. Clerk, we will do Calendar 528.

THE CLERK:

House Calendar 528, Favorable Report of the joint
standing Committee on Insurance and Real Estate,
Senate Bill 480, AN ACT CONCERNING LIFE INSURANCE
PROCEDURE LICENSES AND REGISTRATIONS OF BROKER-
DEALERS, AGENTS, INVESTMENT ADVISERS AND INVESTMENT
ADVISER AGENTS.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The distinguished Chairman of the Insurance and
Real Estate Committee, Representative Megna.

REP. MEGNA (97th):

Thank -- thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move acceptance of the joint
committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill,
in concurrence with the Senate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The question is on passage and concurrence.
Would you explain the bill, please, Representative --

REP. MEGNA (97th):

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CONNECTICUT
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Those absent and not voting 3

THE CHAIR:

The bill passes.

Senator. Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, would ask the Clerk to call
calendar page 3, Calendar 187, Senate Bill 426.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 3, Calendar 187, Senate Bill Number 426,
AN ACT SUSPENDING AND EVALUATING THE
CONSOLIDATION OF DISPATCH CENTERS WITHIN THE
DIVISION OF STATE POLICE, favorable report of the
Committee on Public Safety. There are
amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Hartley, good evening, madam.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Good evening, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Almost good morning --

SENATOR HARTLEY:

With the hopes this is going to be the last one
in the queue, I will be brief, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

I move acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark?

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Yes indeed, Madam President.

The Clerk is in possession of LCO Number 4983. I ask that the Clerk please call and I be granted leave to summarize, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4983, Senate "A," offered by Senators Hartley, Guglielmo, et al.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Madam President, I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

The motion is on adoption. Will you remark, ma'am?

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Yes. Yes, indeed, Madam President.

This is a strike-all. It's a very simple concept. The amendment requires that law enforcement agencies that hire a police officer within two years of obtaining certification at

another enforcement agency, to reimburse the certifying agency for the cost of such certification.

It's a basic fairness issue about one compensating the employer who underwrites the training, not providing windfall to those who might take on a person who is trained within the 24-month period and not penalizing the officer themselves.

I move adoption, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Seeing none, at this time I will try your minds on Senate "A."

All those in favor of Senate "A," please say aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed?

Senate "A" passes.

Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

The amendment now becomes the bill and I urge passage, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark on the bill? Will your remark on the bill?

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

I have mixed feelings on the bill. I haven't decided how I'm going to vote on it yet, because while I can appreciate what the bill as amended... does it also does harm to the individual police officer as well, because you're basically holding that individual hostage at the place where he is, that hired him initially for a two-year period.

Now this, the General Assembly, through the POST, passed several years ago that says you have to put in at least two years in your police department before you can transfer out, to alleviate the concerns of the one department that does the hiring, they fronted the money for the training, for the going to the police academy. They fronted the uniforms. They fronted everything, and then would happen is the officer would look around and say, well, I can go get a better deal over here, so I'm going to apply over there, and then they go.

So what they come with was a two-year -- you had to stay at that police agency for two years unless the chief of the police of that community signed a waiver form saying they release you to go. And I felt that that standard has been working well.

Now we're taking away that standard saying -- because I'm sure a directive will come down from the town that says, well, we don't want you signing any waivers because -- you can sign it, but we want to make sure we get all of our money back. And while it may help the town out it hurts the individual that is just looking just for the best place for their career.

It's a very competitive profession to get into. It's exhaustive, the whole hiring process to go from a physical agility, to a psychological, to drug screening, written tests, oral board examinations, background investigations,

polygraph investigations. So you don't see that in almost any other profession.

So when you finally get through it, you go to the police academy and then, you know, maybe you found another job in another community that might just be a benefit for you and/or your family. Now prior to that you are held for two years, but your chief might understand. And say, you know what? This is a good fit for you. Thank you for your time. I will sign the waiver for you and you can go.

Now we're you're saying that your community is going to be held for that, accountable for that amount of money that they spend for the training. So it may not be easier for an officer to go switch to another police department. So I have some reservations as far as that goes.

But when we're talking about police officers and switching and things and the cost of police officers, I believe the Clerk has in his position an amendment LCO 4888, I believe. I ask that it be called and I be allowed to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4888, Senate "B," offered by Senator Witkos.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, I move adoption, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on adoption. Will you remark, sir?

SENATOR WITKOS: And thank you, Madam President.

This amendment, we've heard before in this chamber, this has to deal with the double billing of state troopers in the resident state trooper program, but it's changed a little bit. And if you give me permission here I'll give you a quick synopsis of what that is.

Currently if a town is served by a barracks and the communities want to have a resident trooper spend time in their community, their cost is 70 percent. They pay 70 percent of the cost of the salary and 70 percent of the fringe benefits.

What's happening under the current law is if their trooper is required to work overtime the town pays 100 percent of the cost and 100 percent of the fringe benefits. So they're double billed on the fringe benefits.

This amendment before you says, under the regular costs now the town will pay 100 percent of the salary, because the officer is spending time in that community to do the work. That's why they're on the overtime basis, but now the community will pay 30 percent of the fringe costs. So the total to the town now is 100 percent of the fringe that they're paying for.

We're going to get away with the practice of paying more than 100 percent of the cost of the fringe. So we're saying 100 percent of the salary on overtime and 30 percent of fringe. So if you take the 70 percent for the regular and the 30 percent for the overtime, the town is paying just 100 percent of the fringe benefit costs.

I think that is a fairness issue to all of the municipalities that engage in the resident state trooper program. Why in the world would we charge our municipalities more than 100 percent of something to make money off of it? And that's what we're doing as -- at the State, we're making money off the backs of the municipalities when they've already paid 100 percent of the cost.

So I'm hopeful that the chamber will find a favorable motion on the adoption, Madam President and urge adoption.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Yes, thank you, Madam President.

With regard to the amendment before us, I'd like to say I'm very sensitive. This discussion has been brought to the forefront when the percentages were changed for overtime costs. However, this is something that is not in the budget right now and therefore could not be accommodated, but I thank Senator Witkos for his proposal.

Thank you, Madam President. I urge reduction and ask for a roll call vote, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. A roll call vote will be taken.

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President.

I rise in support of the amendment and I want to thank Senator Witkos for putting it forward. Probably seven or eight of the ten towns that I represent have resident troopers and each and every time I speak to my first selectman about the costs of that program it just seems to get higher and higher and more and more being the liability or the responsibility of the community rather than the State of Connecticut. And we've

seen this happen for years.

So I appreciate Senator Witkos putting this forward and hopeful that it will pass this body. And if not, we can continue to work on this each and every year because I think it's an important issue for the smaller communities that many of us represent.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will your remark? Will you remark?

If not, Mr. Clerk will you call for a roll call vote and the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call on Senate Amendment Schedule "B" has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, Will you call it one more time, please? Thank you.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call on Senate "B" has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call on Senate "B," ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted -- all members have voted. The machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On Senate "B."

Total Number Voting	32
Necessary for Adoption	17
Those voting Yea	14
Those voting Nay	18
Those absent and not voting	4

THE CHAIR:

The amendment fails.

Will your remark further?

Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Yes, Madam President.

I urge passage of the underlining bill, but I would like to also have a point of information. And that is there's nothing in this proposal that would prevent a lateral transfer. And much time was spent to make sure that that wouldn't happen, because in the past it was true that the two years prevented a transfer because you would have to go back and go through the entire academy again. That's not what this does at all.

If a hiring unit that hires from a unit that has just trained an officer within 24 months, hires that person, they simply will have to pay the cost they would have had they hired that person directly.

So it's parody across the board. An officer is still free to laterally move wherever they can't. Both the Police Officers Association and POST spoke with us and approved this and thought that this was a fair compromise which would basically pay for basic training no matter what the unit was and not prevent an officer from moving laterally.

I thank you very much, Madam President and ask for passage, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark further on the bill?

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

If I may, just a question to the proponent of the bill?

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you.

While the initial training period may be for a matter of months and followed up by on-the-road training, then they become part of the regular patrol area way before the two-year period.

So if say, an officer is -- decides after 20 months, I want to go someplace else, would the receiving community be required to pay for all of the time or just the time spent during the training period?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Yes. Thank you, Madam President, through you.

Right now the way the law stands no one can be hired until they are certified. They are not certified until they complete the academy, typically 24 months plus the on-the-road, which is another 12. So we're talking 36 months right now as a law stands within the lateral transfer that we've made in the past years.

So no one can be hired until they are certified or go to another unit. So if someone was finished with that training and the on the road training, yes indeed they could and the hiring law-enforcement unit would simply pay the unit that initially hired the police officer the cost of the training.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

So for clarification purposes, if they've completed their training and now they're part of the patrol unit, and they hadn't gotten to the point where they've exceeded their two years, then the receiving department that has hired away, their only responsible for paying for the time when the person was a training; is that correct?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Through you, Madam President.

That is absolutely correct. There is nothing in here to penalize. It's simply whoever you are,

whatever hiring you are, you pay the cost of training.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

I thank Senator Hartley for the answer.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will your remark? Will your remark?

If not, Mr. Clerk will you call for a roll call vote on this bill, please. And the machine is open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted -- all members have voted. The machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill Number 426, as amended.

Total Number Voting	33
Necessary for Adoption	17
Those voting Yea	33
Those voting Nay	0

Those absent and not voting 3

THE CHAIR:

The bill passes.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, before calling for a vote on the second Consent Calendar -- have several additional items to add to that Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Madam President.

The first is calendar page 6, Calendar 328, House Bill 5125, move to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

The second item is calendar page 8, Calendar 337, House Bill Number 5131, move to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, sir, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**PUBLIC
SAFETY
PART 2
382 – 761**

2014

1
rc/gbr PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

March 11, 2014
9:30 A.M.

CHAIRMAN: Senator Hartley
Representative Dargan

MEMBERS PRESENT:

SENATORS: Ayala, Guglielmo, Osten,
Witkos

REPRESENTATIVES:

Arconti, Bacchiochi,
Boukus, Clemons, D'Amelio,
Esposito, Giegler,
Gonzalez, Hampton, Hwang,
Jutila, Kupchick, Mikutel,
Nicastro, Orange, Rovero,
Verrengia, Yaccarino,
Zupkus

SENATOR HARTLEY: Good morning. Good morning, all.
So we will now convene our public hearing for
the Public Safety and Security Committee.
Thank you all for being with us, and we will
open up by invoking some executive privilege
for the President of the Senate, and I would
ask him to join us now. And we're grateful to
have his direct input this morning on Senate
Bill 426, one of great interest to many.

Good morning.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Good morning, Senator Hartley,
Representative Dargan, Members of the Public
Safety and Security Committee. It's true; I
want to talk about Senate Bill 426, AN ACT
SUSPENDING AND EVALUATING THE CONSOLIDATION OF

DISPATCH CENTERS WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE
POLICE.

The bill would suspend the current administrative process of consolidation of police dispatch centers within the Division of State Police. The consolidation plan, which was a department initiative, was not approved by -- by the Legislature would, if fully carried out, reduce the number of dispatch centers from 12 to five.

The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection had originally hoped the plan would result in greater efficiency and cost savings. However, it's not clear the consolidation will result in economies of scale that will produce savings or faster response times. In fact, it's possible that consolidation will have the opposite effect. While the consolidation plan was well intentioned, it failed to take into account the reality that many of our Troops function as local police departments, serving many towns. The combination of shutting down Troop barracks in the evening hours, and closing down local dispatch service has changed the local connection between the Troop and the towns in the service area, and in my opinion, not for the better.

As a result of the consolidation plan, State Troopers no longer take phone calls from the public. In addition, the dispatch function is now separate from the call taker function. For example, prior to the change at Troop D in Danielson, a State Trooper and a trained

dispatcher would staff the call desk together. Both had the authority to immediately dispatch an officer to the scene. Now, at the consolidated dispatch center in Tolland, newly-trained call takers accept calls from the public; they enter the information into a database. A dispatcher is then notified after the information is entered and makes a determination about whether or not to send an officer to the scene.

It is difficult to see how this multi-step process creates efficiency or quicker response time. New call takers are not given the authority or the ability to dispatch a trooper, and may not be familiar with local geographic areas.

A recent incident in Windham that was reported in the media highlighted an adverse outcome of the consolidation efforts. On January 20th of this year, two young siblings were at home when burglars broke into the home. Several calls to the consolidated emergency dispatch center failed to result in a timely police response due to confusion at the center as to the location of the home. Ninety minutes of no response elapsed. Luckily no one was hurt due to the intervention of a neighbor who heard the minors calling for help.

I would propose an addition to this legislation. We should not only halt the consolidation, but reverse that process. We should instruct the department to restore local dispatch in those Troops that serve areas where

the majority of towns do not have local police departments, and by doing so also restore 24-hour coverage at the barracks. . The barracks should not be locked with the lights out when local residents need the emergency refuge and safety of the Troop barracks.

When the department decided to pursue consolidation, they overlooked an important consideration that also argues in favor of local dispatch. More regional dispatch centers result in greater security for the residents of Connecticut. When there are only five centers instead of 12, the impact of the loss of any one or more centers places a much greater burden on the remaining centers, and could leave vast areas of the state without the protection of public safety dispatch. Such loss could result from deliberate sabotage and disruption, or severe weather damage from hurricanes or tornados. Twelve regional dispatch centers are the equivalent of a system of public safety microgrids. If one goes down, there are numerous others powered up and ready to assume overflow calls.

The previous system of local dispatch was not broken. This new "fix" is not better, and it should be reversed.

In closing, I want to again thank the Committee for raising this bill, and urge amending it to include restoring local dispatch and overnight coverage at Troop barracks.

Thanks very much.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, President Williams. I would just like to say that we recognize that efficiencies are very important in all State agencies, but not, of course, at the expense of public safety. And so, while in the bill we're asking for this evaluation to be completed by January 15, we're hoping, because of the urgency of public safety for the State of Connecticut, some of the instances that you point out, that it will be as soon as possible.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you for being with us.
Questions?

Yes, Senator Guglielmo.

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: Just a comment. I want to thank Senator Williams for coming in. I totally agree. I had the opportunity to talk to the dad who was involved in the Windham case. He was very gracious and understanding and so on, but I mean that could have been an absolute disaster. And Sunday I returned a call from a lead dispatcher and the urgency that our Co-Chair mentioned is really there. I mean some of these dispatchers and call takers are working 90 hours of overtime, according to my source, in a two-week period. So there's a great deal of fatigue, and those are stressful jobs to start with.

And then the other part of it is what you mention in your testimony, the call takers

actually -- my understanding, and correct me if I'm wrong, it goes onto a screen to the dispatchers. They don't talk directly. And then in some cases, the information is so sketchy that the dispatcher has to call back to the call taker and get more details to see whether to dispatch the trooper or not.

So it looks like an extra layer of bureaucracy in a system that's clogging it up, not making it smoother. So thank you for testifying, Senator.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: I agree, Senator Guglielmo.
Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Senator.

Representative Rovero.

REP. ROVERO: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Senator, I'd really like to thank you for testifying this morning. As you know, I live in a Troop area, and I'm not going to go into some of the horror stories I've heard, not only from police departments, as well as citizens.

I just hope that we can reverse this function that they're trying to limit the number of dispatch centers before we're faced with a loss of life, and then we're going to all sit here and say why didn't we do something. So I want to thank you very much for your testimony and let's -- let's hope it gets put into place before something drastic happens. Thank you again.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Representative Rovero.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you.

Senator Osten.

SENATOR OSTEN: Good morning, President Williams.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Good morning, Katherine.

SENATOR OSTEN: Nice to see you here today. I just also wanted to echo the comments of my colleagues from the eastern part of the state who have experienced some very strong concerns about the consolidation.

I went out to, as you know, to Troop C and did tour the dispatch area, saw the fact that the physical space is not exactly designed as it needs to be to take care of as many Troops as it is now taking care of. I talked to the dispatchers about the amount of overtime that they were doing which is not a good thing either for the worker, or their families, or the people, most importantly for the people calling the dispatch centers. There is a huge amount of fatigue that is happening.

I recognized that they did not have the hardware necessary to handle the calls up at Troop C for all of the dispatch areas. I have talked to State Troopers who are not getting accurate information when they are responding to potentially very dangerous situations, and

saw -- and have met with the current -- the new Commissioner in Public Safety.

I think that the idea had merit, but I think that the way -- unfortunately the way it's been carried out has put our residents -- all of our residents at a significant amount of decrease in public safety, not an increase in public safety.

And living in rural Connecticut where, on a regular basis it takes a State Trooper anywhere from a half hour or more to get there just based on the fact that we often don't have enough troopers, to put them further and the constituents and residents further at risk by having it take longer because of an ineffective dispatch system, has put us all at risk and our residents. So I appreciate you doing this, and I thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Senator Osten, that raises a good point because of the thoughts behind the consolidation was that this would put more troopers on the road, and there is evidence that that has occurred, but I would argue that the benefits of retaining local dispatch can be retained by reassigning some of our State Police. I know that the department is looking into the number of troopers who are at the casinos right now, and are looking to the view that that number is perhaps not necessary, and by scaling back there to some degree, we can put more troopers out in the field, and also retain local dispatch which I think is very important.

SENATOR OSTEN: Correct, and also those towns that are paying for Resident Troopers, the Resident Troopers are being dispatched more and more to handle incidents that are not in the town that they are the resident of. So again I think that we just need to look at this from a public safety perspective. It certainly has not saved the State money based on the amount of overtime the dispatchers are doing, and it has not provided a good, clear picture for a trooper once they go on scene.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Senator Osten.

Are there further comments?

Yes, Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, Senator.

While we're asking to put a hold on the consolidation to do an evaluation, if the evaluation shows that it would be a cost-efficient model, it would not disrupt public safety. It is just the way it was initiated this time around. If it was handled in a different way, I am wondering if we would have the same response to that rather than just, in my opinion, using hyperbole in saying that it's a threat to public safety because those men and women troopers are out there 24 hours per day, seven days a week, and they'll respond as needed, and wherever they're needed, even oftentimes coming from their homes.

So I guess my question would be if -- if the evaluation shows that it can be done, but not in the manner that it was currently being done, would we be as supportive?

SENATOR WILLIAMS: That's a great question, and I don't think anyone is suggesting that there's a problem in terms of the troopers' own response. I think you're absolutely right; they're going to respond as quickly as they can. The question is, does this new regional consolidation assist them in the quickest response time, or is it in any way a hindrance?

And my -- my thought on that is sort of what I said at the end of my testimony. The system of local dispatch was not broken. No one was saying that, you know, we have to change this because there are all sorts of problems. There weren't problems. And as we go to this regional system, as I mentioned before, I think there are a lot of different issues to be concerned about, including the fact that if one or more of the consolidated centers goes down, we have a bigger problem than we do if we have 12 regional centers.

So my advice is I -- I don't think we even need a study. My advice is let's -- let's go back to a system that worked; let's upgrade the equipment where necessary at the barracks for the local dispatch; let's -- let's bring that back so that we have folks in the locales who know those geographic areas, who are authorized when they take the call to immediately dispatch

an officer, not to go through a multi-step process where maybe minutes later it gets -- we have a dispatched trooper.

And also, along the line, maybe we've lost some information as one person tells another person, and we're waiting for the information to appear on a screen. That old system wasn't so bad, because we had people empowered to take the call and immediately dispatch a trooper, and I think we ought to go back to that.

SENATOR WITKOS: One of the things that I would hope that if something came out of this is the fact that we need to invest more money in our public safety here in the State of Connecticut. Although the hardware is -- may be somewhat antiquated, the buildings themselves and the conditions that these employees have to work in, you know, they're crumbling around them. And if there was a cost savings by regionalizing a dispatch center, I would hope that we would totally renovate some barracks for these folks that spend, you know, hours upon hours upon hours, and -- and give them the facilities that they -- they need.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Senator.

Thank you, Senator, President Williams, for being with us. We look forward to some good outcomes in a very short timeframe.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Yes, thanks.

SENATOR HARTLEY: And we will now invite Dick Smith from COST to be with us.

SB426

DICK SMITH: Good morning, Representative Dargan, Senator Hartley, and Committee Members. Thank you very much for allowing me to speak today.

I can't agree more with what Senator Williams said just before me. He is 100 percent right. I had -- started to sit down last night -- you have some testimony from the COST in regards to this issue of this troop consolidation, so I'm going to change my thought here a little bit and give you some information that I have because of my experience.

Back in 1973 I started as an auxiliary State Trooper at Troop F. I served about a year, year and a half, and became an officer of town in Deep River. And I had been associated with Troop F, had met many State Troopers, right up to the ranks of Lieutenant Colonels. I have met with the Commissioner of Public Safety on occasion over the last 40 years. I was elected in 1990 as the First Selectman of the Town of Deep River, so I am very familiar with how the State Police operates, and I can tell you that I have been at least a part of that department, and have had cooperation with the Commissioner and members of that department for many, many years.

I cannot say that now. I think this is probably the worse thing that we could have ever done with this troop consolidation, and I talk from experience. It has not been done at Troop F yet, but it has been done in other Troops. In my conversation with troopers, dispatchers, we know now we are spending 1300 hours of overtime every two weeks with the dispatchers who are burnt out. You already see that calls are being missed, dropped, troopers sent to wrong locations.

The way it presently works -- it worked at every troop, was that you had a trooper assigned to the desk every shift who would sit with the dispatcher, and usually it was the same troopers that would work the day shift, the night shift. It varies a little bit, but usually they were the same. They know the area; they know the officers; they know residents which I think is very important, so when a call came in, as Senator said, an officer, whether it be a constable or a trooper was dispatched immediately to the location.

These people that are on the desk knew the officers. If an officer went to a call and his voice changed, they knew that there was an issue there. They knew these people; they knew these troopers and officers that are working.

And I don't speak just from small towns because I've heard, well it's a small town; you know, that's all you're concerned with. I'm not concerned with that. I'm concerned with the

State of Connecticut and all of the residents in Connecticut. This system is not good. This change is not good.

Take a troop like Troop F with 100,000 cars a day going by there. Can you imagine a resident -- you, your family going by there, a road rage incident, and you pull into a troop, and you walk to the door, and the door is locked at 5:00 at night until 6 in the morning, and there's a callbox outside that you have to pick up and call and say, hey, I need help, and you have some nut behind you that may want to hurt you? That happens. That happens in Connecticut every day. Domestic violence. People respond to the Troop as a safe haven.

I've been there and seen people walk in. So to close that, I just can't believe this happened.

I'll give you an incident, because that's what I started to think about last night. Maybe many of you remember back -- it was in the early nineties, (Inaudible) was involved in an incident where he went to a car dealership in East Lyme, and he wanted to buy a car. The salesman had a car; it was a mustang. They were driving down 95. I think they were just entering a line, and he ended up shooting the salesman in the face, stole the car. He went through -- down 95, came up on 9. I was the fifth car back in that incident. He went into Haddam where he smashed the car. He took a van with three kids in it. He went through Colchester's territory, and then up towards Portland where the incident stopped. He was

shot and killed there. He was shooting from the van at the troopers and the officers that were pursuing him through that distance.

But if you talk to anybody that was involved at that time, they gave credit to the trooper that was on the desk which was Joe Brennan. He handled that situation from the minute the call -- he received it on 95, all the way through the shooting near Portland where this individual was killed. One child was shot, but survived, and later died.

But I can't imagine a call taker taking that call, putting it on paper in the computer to a dispatcher, and a dispatcher, in that kind of situation either going to another civilian supervisor dispatcher. The time lost there is critical and there's calls that happen every day at these troops. And this layer that you're going to go through now, it just -- it doesn't make sense.

After 9/11 the State Police leadership made some important decisions and changes in how they operate. They put brand new consoles, a third console at Troop F and other troops in preparation for incidents like hurricanes, or disasters, or a 9/11, or a Newtown. So they were thinking about these things, and for whatever reason those things have changed. I know this proposal came up, it's my understanding twice in early 2000 and once in 2005, and the leadership of the Connecticut State Police reviewed it, looked at it, and said it was not a good thing to do, and it was

not enacted. Then it has been, obviously you know, in the last year and a half or so.

SENATOR HARTLEY: And so now can you summarize, Dick, for us?

DICK SMITH: So again, I ask for your support in this bill, and I agree with Senator Williams; it would be nice if the Troops were restored to what they had before.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you very much. No, I've not really seen a middle man added to any scenario that has made for perhaps a shorter process, just by virtue of adding that layer. So this is a very important conversation, and your experience is very important for all the committee members to hear. Thanks for being with us.

DICK SMITH: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Are there questions? Yes.

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS: Thank you. Is your town covered by Resident or by the barracks?

DICK SMITH: It's covered by a Resident Trooper. We have a Resident Trooper. Over the last ten years, we've added two full timers. We have four -- two part timers and two full timers just because of the amount of activity and the calls that we're responding to, and I'm not alone. The Town of Essex has done that; they

have three full timers now. The Town of Chester next door has a full timer. East Haddam just put two full timers on. It's just -- the calls are there now, and especially in the shoreline where we increase by population by thousands of people in the summertime. The Troop just can't handle those kind of calls.

SENATOR WITKOS: And the reason why -- and this is an assumption on my part, but the reason, and correct me if I'm wrong, the reason why you're -- you avail yourself to the Resident Trooper Program is because its cost -- it's cheaper for you to have police protection through the Troops and barracks and the Resident Trooper than it is to have your own municipal police department?

DICK SMITH: I'll be the first one to say that is probably the best program that was ever established by the State of Connecticut, that where a Town and the State work together. And I testified last week about the costs -- the overtime costs, but it is a bargain for any town like Deep River, yes.

SENATOR WITKOS: And in your conversations -- and I'm not aware -- the reason why this is before us - - was it passed down from the State for budgetary reasons? Or through your contacts with folks, were you able to determine the reason why we moved into this consolidation in the first place?

DICK SMITH: I believe it was proposed to the Governor as a cost savings as well as an

efficiency -- improving efficiency of how they operate. I believe that -- not to be critical of any one person, but I think this is the idea of just a couple of individuals. I think the department as a whole does not agree with this. I know that First Selectmen in many of the towns that I talk to, and the troopers don't agree with it.

SENATOR WITKOS: And when -- as the First Elected Official in your community, were you -- did you have a conversation with anybody from the State Police Administration or the State Government regarding the movement to do the consolidation, or was this to see -- for input, or was this kind of a this is what's coming down the pike?

DICK SMITH: Oh yes, I did. Back actually in 2012, when this all started, I -- I'm on the COST Board of Directors, and Barbara Henry from Roxbury is a First Selectman up there and this was starting, and she was experienced her trooper being called out -- out of her town, and actually responded to Litchfield who paid for it with prisoners, and she was very concerned, and that many Legislators from that area as well as First Selectmen did approach the Department of Public Safety with their concerns.

After some months went by, I personally did, in 2012, request a meeting with the Commissioner of State Police which was Reuben Bradford at the time. I worked with him back in the seventies actually, believe it or not. I did meet there and I brought Senator Eileen Daily -

- I'm sure you know Senator Daily. She retired that year, a wonderful lady. We had a meeting at headquarters with the Colonel, and the Commissioner, and there were several other staff members there. At that time I talked about my experiences, about my concerns, not only for towns that had already experienced this change, but Troop F.

During that conversation, I was told that -- Senator Daily was sitting right next to me, that they were investigating whether or not to shut Troop F down, and move the salvation of dispatch from Troop F, I, and H to Middletown, or whether they were going to keep Troop F open and have them dispatch for those three Troops. He said it was a plan in place, or they were -- they were reviewing it, and it would be a plan in place. At that time Senator Daily said well when that plan is completed, can we get a copy of it to see what the effect would be, and the cost to do one or the other? We were told yes, and a few minutes later we were -- we were stopped and he said well there's really no plan in place; there's nothing on paper that shows the cost of staying at Troop F or going to Middletown. So we -- Eileen asked the (inaudible), well how are you justifying doing this, you know, shutting this troop down at nighttime and going to Middletown? I was just told there was a committee established that was reviewing that, and that they would get back to both the Senator and myself when that committee had completed their report to the -- to the Colonel, and I haven't heard anything since 2012.

SENATOR WITKOS: Thank you very much. Thank you,
Madam Chair.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Senator.

Yes, Representative -- Representative Orange,
to be followed by Representative Rovero.

REP. ORANGE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning.
How are you, Dick?

DICK SMITH: Hey, how are you?

REP. ORANGE: Good to see you.

DICK SMITH: Thank you.

REP. ORANGE: I just want to mention to you that you
talked about 2005 when this idea originated,
and just to let you know, then Speaker Moira
Lyons sent Steve Dargan, Representative Dargan,
and myself down to Pennsylvania to look at
their centralized dispatch. And, of course,
Pennsylvania is a much larger state than we
are. Their consolidated dispatch actually fell
apart since 2005, and they're back to
dispatching the way that the home rule, the way
that I believe we should be dispatched, and
keeping our Troops -- and keeping our Troops
open.

So I just wanted to point out that we came back
and we didn't think it was a great idea,
Representative Dargan and I. I won't get into
the part where we were stuck in an airport

together for hours and hours on a plane delay, but nonetheless I just wanted to bring that to your attention that, you know, from the General Assembly we were sent to look at that.

I think it's a bad idea. I was in the Town of Windham last night at a meeting and, of course, there was the event in Windham whereas two children called 911 and there was a mix-up -- a total mix-up. It took hours before the police actually arrived. It went to a call taker, dispatcher. I believe that there should be a trooper sitting right there, sworn personnel, making any decisions. I don't believe in the call taker because they put -- they take the call in; they put it in a box; the dispatcher gets it. Who knows how they fall into the categories. And it's much easier, I believe, and safer for either a civilian dispatcher or a trooper to just take the call and start the call while the person is still on the phone.

The Town of Windham, unfortunately when we talk about the Resident Trooper Program, they of course have the City of Willimantic and it has their own police department. The Town of Windham has two Resident Troopers that are in a complex. They've been there for a long time, and I understand that there are going to be officials to look at that to see if they really want to keep the Resident Trooper Program and review their police program in that town, and I think it's unfortunate that it came to consolidated dispatch for them to come together to decide which way they want to police their entire area, being the Town of Windham with the

borough of the City of Willimantic. So -- and that all came from that one particular call, that obviously there was a flaw.

And Senator Osten -- oh, she's gone -- and I introduced this bill with the hopes that we can actually undo some of the dispatch centers so that we can get back to home rule. Right now, in your area you're lucky because the Commissioner has that on hold as we speak, but in the other areas where it's already been consolidated, they made no haste or waste out of taking out those consoles, so that almost like well, we're not going back, you know the mentality that we sometimes see from that particular agency at the head.

So I certainly agree with you and I truly miss Eileen Daily as I'm sure you do, too, and I thank you for coming to testify because this is a very important issue. It's an important issue for the safety of the residents of the State of Connecticut and the safety of the troopers as well.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Representative Orange.

Representative Rovero.

REP. ROVERO: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Jeff, thank you for your testimony. I want to make a statement probably more than a question. I was the Police Commissioner in Putnam, so I got to meet and know a lot of State Troopers, local police officers, and so forth, and I have

not heard one retired trooper, or a present trooper, or a civilian that has told me that this system is any better, any safer, and cost effective. I just can't imagine how this got as far as it did. Like my Colleague Orange just brought up, this was talked about years ago and higher aboves said it's not going to work. And all the sudden, out of nowhere it's pushed on us, and nobody really had any say about it.

I can't imagine it going this far, and I think it's high time that people like yourself and the rest of us here turn around and say that some towns have local departments and we can all say that we help subsidize some of the State Police in our local towns. But on the other hand, we're talking about lives; we're talking about public safety. So we sit here and say what is our most important thing, and everybody says education, and I say life is, because without life we don't need an education.

So once again, thank you very much for coming this morning, and thank you, Madam Chairman.

DICK SMITH: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Representative Rovero.

Are there further questions?

Dick, can I just -- so I heard you say that you have two -- oh, pardon me, so we also want to hear from Representative Giegler -- two

permanent Resident Troopers. Are you experiencing that -- that they are getting called away from those assignments to fill in because of other emergencies?

DICK SMITH: Well, we're not in the same situation as Troop B's territory, and A and B Troops. We're kind of still -- well, we haven't been consolidated yet. But I will tell you that this is a great system, and at least in Troop F's territory, and I know it's that way in other Troops, is that the old way, this is not uncommon. Everybody works together. I mean troopers -- the Resident Trooper in Deep River, Resident Trooper in Essex, will respond to a call in the city if they have a major incident, as I stated last week.

So there's not that -- they do get called away, but we -- we don't complain because we get a great service for that. And our local officers sometimes will get dispatched to a surrounding town. If the Troop has six troopers on at nighttime, and you get a major incident, a domestic violence call where it involves two or three troopers and they're tied up, and you get a drunk driver and he's tied up, and you get a fight in Old Lyme or something like that, they're just shorthanded, you know. And -- but it works very well together. So that's not a complaint. I don't -- we do do that. We have one Resident Trooper and as I said we have now two full-time officers and two part timers.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Okay. Thank you.

Yes, Representative Giegler.

REP. GIEGLER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for coming today. You mentioned Troop F being on 95, Route 95. Has that been consolidated as of yet?

DICK SMITH: No. It's the last phase of this program.

REP. GIEGLER: Now if -- if they had -- if they consolidate and move it to Middletown, and they pull your dispatch center, what's the closest police or State Trooper barracks to 95 if they -- if they take the dispatch center out?

DICK SMITH: Well this is another issue that came up and, you know, based on my experience I asked a bunch of detailed question. And one of my concerns was well, okay, if we shut down this troop down at nighttime, and it's closed from 5 o'clock to 6 in the morning, you get a trooper -- you get a local officer, constable -- they make an arrest and go to the Troop. Some of it's just processing, you know, the drunk is a DUI. The process is they stay for four hours before they're released. So I was told well we're going to have a trooper that's going to be called a floater and then what he'll do or she will do is respond with that officer, or trooper, go to the Troop, process this person. You can't have one -- one -- you can't have one person there processing somebody, and then they would have to sit until this person is released.

If it was somebody that -- like we had a murderer that went to the Troop, and there's a bond placed on him, he's processed; they've got to be transported to someplace, you know, and I said well where we're going to go? Are we going to go to Hartford? Are we going to go to Montville, you know, with this individual? And I was told (inaudible), and he said well we're working with the Sheriff's Department. The sheriffs might come pick him up. I said there's no sheriffs assigned in (inaudible.). I says how's that going to work? Well they might have to put extra sheriffs on. Well where's the savings there? So they said well, we'll have the trooper transport him to Hartford. So I said well if you get a fight and somebody's sheriff is hurt in Old Lyme, you get an arrest in Deep River, and you take these two officers, a trooper and an officer and you're transporting somebody to Hartford, your night's shot. So then if you have other major incidents, what's going to happen here? What if people don't come to back these troopers up on these calls, of these local officers?

And I still to this day don't have an answer. And I don't think that they can answer that. I don't think they even have a plan as to where they're going to send these people. It's just -- you wouldn't do this as a manager. You just -- you would not do this.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Well what you mentioned is very important. We're part of the consolidation on the western part of the state that has already taken place, and Troop A was on Route 84, and

was the only Troop on 84. So it was very important that it was located there.

We actually, as a legislative body, our Legislators in my regional area found out on May 3rd that on May 4th this is taking place. We had no idea. The dispatch center has been pulled out of Troop A and all we have is the little blue smurf there. So for an emergency on the highway for someone pulling off at night, it's really a problem, because there -- I mean, I had someone a couple of years ago that had a problem on 84, and they tried calling the number and there was nothing there, and they got put on hold to dispatch, and that person was being tailgated on -- a younger person on Route 84.

So it's a tremendous problem and -- and also to add to that, Troop A was also one of the exits that people exit for Newtown, and when you mention catastrophic and needing backup for somebody at a dispatch center, if any time we needed it, it was then. But you can go off exits 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 to get to Sandy Hook. That dispatch center was pulled already, so it couldn't even be used in any form of backup.

So the concern is that this was done and it was done very quickly. I'm glad the Commissioner has kind of put it on hold, and she's looking at that, but it really brings into light the concern about not having Troops along our major highways, 95 and 84, so I, you know, appreciate the fact that COST is coming forward, and

you're coming forward to bring that concern out. Thank you so much.

DICK SMITH: Thank you. And my goal is, obviously after I leave here, I'm hoping to meet with the Commissioner and go right to the Governor because I do not think of an issue that has come before this state -- and I talk just not about the towns. You know, the towns and the cities, we're all together in this, and everyone of us that lives in the city does use 95, does use route 9, 84, does travel to family members. So we're all affected by what's happened here, and I -- and I just think to me in my career, and I hope to be around for many more years, is I'm going to fight this fight to the very end because that's how important it is for me.

And I want to tell you that the Connecticut State Police, the men and women that you have in those departments, are outstanding. They're professionals; they're doing their best in regards to this here, but they're frustrated. They're stressed out. I mean, you can see it when you talk to them, and I'm talking about -- not you, Beth -- I'm talking about the troopers that I know from other Troops that I've met over the years, retired, like I said, up like to Lieutenant Colonels. I just hope this new Commissioner will talk to some of those people, because I don't think that was done, and I think that if somebody went and talked to these -- in 2005, the people that were in charge then, and talked about why they didn't think

this was going to work, this might not have happened.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you. Thank you very much, Dick.

DICK SMITH: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: And we will now move on to Tim Sugrue.

Thank you, Tim.

TIMOTHY SUGRUE: Good morning, Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, Committee Members.

I'm from the Office of the Chief State's Attorney. I'm here for the Chief State's Attorney, Kevin Kane, to just make known our --

SENATOR HARTLEY: Is your mic on, Tim? Talk into the mic. That's great.

TIMOTHY SUGRUE: Is that good, Senator?

SENATOR HARTLEY: Yes.

TIMOTHY SUGRUE: Just to repeat, I'm here for Chief State's Attorney, Kevin Kane, to discuss S.B. 429 which addresses the "knockout" crime in terms of the assault statute, and I would just like to make known some of the concerns that the Division of Criminal Justice has with that, and there's really three primary concerns, and it's contained in our written testimony which I hope you have or certainly will get.

going around the country right now. And I think it's important that we get that message out to our young high school students or college students that this is not a joke, and there's been people hurt from this, and near death, too. So I think that that's the message that we, as this Committee, is trying to get forward, that this is not a cool thing to do.

So we look forward to working with you. We know that maybe some of the criminal offenses that we put in here are very -- pretty strict, and I understand the Public Defender's point of view, too; but hopefully working together we could come to some resolution on this, and thank you for testifying today.

TIMOTHY SUGRUE: Thank you, Representative Dargan.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thanks, Tim.

If there are no further questions, thank you very much for your input.

TIMOTHY SUGRUE: Thanks for the opportunity.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Yes, and we'd like to invite Representative Flexer. Good morning, Representative.

REP. FLEXER: Good morning. Good morning, Representative Dargan, Senator Hartley, Representative Giegler, and Senator Guglielmo, and Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee.

SB 426

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 426, AN ACT SUSPENDING AND EVALUATING THE CONSOLIDATION OF DISPATCH CENTERS WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE POLICE.

I am here today to voice my strong opposition to the continued consolidation of State Police dispatch centers across the state, but with particular emphasis on the issue as it relates to the relocation of the dispatch center utilized by Troop D in Danielson, Connecticut. I am asking the Committee to reverse consolidation.

Last year dispatchers were moved from stations not only in Danielson, but from Colchester and Montville as well, into the main dispatch center in Tolland. Not only has this consolidation increased wait times from non-emergency services such as fingerprinting, or the reporting of crimes and accidents, but it has dangerously increased the response time in cases of emergency calls.

Troop D functions as a local police department to multiple towns. Only one town in Windham County, Plainfield, is fully covered by a local police department, and two towns, Putnam and Windham, which is covered by Troop K, have departments that cover the central portions of their communities, but not the entire town.

Since shifting the main dispatch center to Troop C in Tolland, the people now in charge of dispatching State Police to Danielson and surrounding areas are geographically unfamiliar

with the region, and in turn cannot direct officers to certain areas in a most efficient manner, either distance or time wise.

In the months since consolidated dispatch has been rolled out in eastern Connecticut, there have been numerous serious incidents where State Police response was either delayed or simply unavailable. At Troop D alone, these instances have ranged from the inability to report a road rage incident to a sexual assault being unreported. These incidents have largely occurred because the Troop D barracks are now only accessible to the public between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Troop D, like many police departments, is viewed to be a safe haven, a place to go in an emergency. Since dispatch was consolidated last fall, the barracks is hardly open outside these hours.

There has been an effort to improve access outside these hours, but it simply isn't working. I have personally stopped by Troop D more than a dozen times outside of normal business hours, and I've only found the doors to be open once.

As you heard this morning, on January 20th, 2014 there was a home invasion in Windham. Inside the house were two children who, upon hearing someone trying to get inside, locked themselves in a bathroom, and as children are instructed to do from an early age, they called 911. The family in question resides only minutes from a police station. But due to their

location State Troopers are in charge of responding to the area 911 calls.

The officers arrived an hour and a half later. Upon the arrival of the police, the responding officers were disturbed at the large amount of time that had gone by between the initial 911 call, and when they were asked to respond to the home invasion. If the dispatch centers had not been consolidated, officers could have been informed of the situation and deployed to the home in a timely manner, not only possibly catching the thieves in the act, but more importantly, ensuring the safety of the two children trapped inside their own home.

Another issue with the shifting of the location of the Troop D dispatch to Troop C in Tolland is that Troop D is no longer considered to be a 24-hour force by many residents of northeastern Connecticut. Due to Troop D acting as a local police force for Killingly and other area towns, this puts the distance of these towns at an immediate disadvantage in comparison to others. Whereas other towns will have an almost immediate response time, the people of northeastern Connecticut will regularly have to wait for someone not familiar with the area to send help, which could easily result in a response time that would be completely unacceptable for an emergency situation.

State Police officials claim this move has made overall operations more efficient; and even keeps troopers and civilians safer; all the while the State Police Union says otherwise.

Response times have increased anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes, and Union officials have not wavered from their position that not only is this system less efficient, but that it consistently puts lives at risk, particularly in the area served by Troop D. I have heard this firsthand from numerous troopers that work in eastern Connecticut.

This bill should effectively erase the changes made as of January -- July first, excuse me, 2013, and revert to the extremely functional system that had been in place for decades before, allowing dispatchers familiar with the area to be in charge of sending out troopers on call, resulting in shorter response times, and increase in the level of overall safety, and possibly most important, peace of mind for the citizens of northeastern Connecticut, knowing that if they find themselves in an emergency situation they will be attended to and taken care of within a reasonable and timely fashion.

While I have been hopeful that the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection -- I'm almost done, I'm sorry -- would reconsider --

SENATOR HARTLEY: You think that's a message? This -
- this room is wired.

REP. FLEXER: That's the four-minute warning?

SENATOR HARTLEY: That's how we handle people. No, go ahead, Ma'am.

REP. FLEXER: While I have been hopeful that the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection would reconsider the consolidation of State Police dispatch services, I do not believe the Legislature can wait any longer for the department to take action. This legislation is critical to continuing the mission to keep our constituents safe, and your action suspending and reversing consolidation will guarantee their protection.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank -- thank you very much, Mae. You know, the other side of this conversation is that we bring in and empower Commissioners to run their agencies, and we now have a new Commissioner who has -- and I'm not sure if you're on Executive Noms, but who has gone through that process, and is, you know, boots on the ground, high heels on the ground, whatever you want to say, and she -- she has impressed me very much. We have a date in here which I fully expect that we will not be into 15 -- January 15 to deal with this, and -- and she has gotten message as well as I think her own assessment is leading her in another place than what we were previously -- where we were previously going.

So thank you very much for serving your District as well as you do and -- and being with us. Are there further questions?

Yes, Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, Representative.

REP. FLEXER: Good morning.

SENATOR WITKOS: Just a question, and I'm sure there's an investigation that's ongoing, if it hasn't been completed yet. You said there was an hour and a half response time for the folks in Windham. Do you know if -- if that's attributable to the dispatch? Or it is because of the -- of the, I would say shortage of troopers that we have out on the roads?

REP. FLEXER: Well I know that there is an investigation going on into that particular incident. I know that there were multiple phone calls made that were not responded to appropriately by the dispatch center. So I would guess, obviously not being personally involved in that situation, that it was probably a combination of the two things.

SENATOR WITKOS: And then you said that the response times out of Danielson are 10 to 20 minutes longer in length. And are you attributing that to the loss of the dispatch center in Danielson, or are you attributing -- would you say that that is because we don't have enough troopers on the road, and they're coming from geographic areas that just takes them longer to get there?

REP. FLEXER: I do think we have an issue with not having enough troopers on the road, and that is

something that -- that should be addressed, particularly in northeastern Connecticut. I believe we need more coverage. But I do think that the increased 10 to 20 minute response time is directly correlated to the dispatch center now being in Tolland, and the new process that it in place with the -- the call takers taking the initial call, not being familiar with the area, and the -- the new steps that have to be gone through when a 911 call comes in has increased the response times.

SENATOR WITKOS: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Senator.

Yes, Representative Rovero.

REP. ROVERO: Thank you, Representative Flexer. I want to say I want to compliment you once again for representing your District very well.

You know, a funny story is that I was coming from Plainfield, Connecticut to Putnam the other night with my wife, and we went by -- there was a big sign on 395 that says: Troop D State Police Barracks This Exit. So I get off the exit. The next sign said take a left. I took a left, got down to Troop D, shook the door, and it was locked.

You know, and my wife said boy I'm glad we didn't have an emergency, and I said you are right. And I did it for one reason, I -- just to see, but I thought they would be open, but I got off 395, a big sign said State Police Troop

D, got off the exit, went to the barracks and the door was locked.

Folks, can you imagine if this was your daughter, your mother, your father or anyone else who saw that sign, and looking for help, and they got to the Troop, and it was a locked door. Folks, I think we've played with this game long enough. It's time we go back to the way it was.

And thank you very much, Representative, for your testimony, and thank you very much for representing your District as well as you do. Thank you.

REP. FLEXER: Thank you. Thank you, Representative Rovero.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Representative Rovero.

Yes, Senator Osten.

SENATOR OSTEN: Thank you very much, Senator Hartley. Thank you very much, Representative, for coming here today. I -- I just want to reiterate that it's not just northeastern Connecticut; it's southeastern Connecticut. Troop E is -- is considered a supertroop, handles the number of calls that are in Troop D, C, and K combined and I -- and when this consolidation happened, I don't want to lose sight of the fact that it is the entire area that needs to be addressed. And it may be a combination of things that have happened in regards to troopers on the road, and the -- and the numbers that are there, but

it is clearly this consolidation that has happened that has been the tipping point of putting people at risk.

We had the same number of troopers -- actually a new class has come in, probably combined with the retirements that have happened, are the same number of troopers on the road today as when we started this dispatch consolidation. I think that this consolidation has created an unsafe environment for the public. Whether it's because we use our Troops, any of the Troops E, D, C and K, as transfer points for children that are involved in custody disputes. We often have parents meet at the Troop so that there will not be a conflict. That has been put at risk based on the fact that we have done this consolidation and have no one at the Troop to come outside and handle a problematic issue that may happen. And it takes much longer for the dispatch to happen, and the information just is not accurate.

I think that in today's technology we could probably handle some of that, but we don't have the technology inside our Troops today to make that a possibility. We would have to increase our technology.

And I would also call for what Senator Witkos said earlier when Senator Williams was here. The state of some of the Troops -- and Troop C is fairly new and a -- and a good-looking facility, a little bursting at the seams right now because it was not set up for the current dispatch center, but some of our Troops are in

deplorable condition and, of course, I put in the bid for Troop E to be actually fixed as it does not have any of the appropriate -- it's an old toll collector's building, and has had very little upgrades.

But I just don't want to lose the sight of it. It's the whole area that's been put at risk right now, and we need to go back to the way it was, and if we had sat down and had conversation, maybe this would have worked, but I think that it was done too fast, and without the correct technology in place for us to handle this situation.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR HARTLEY: And thank you. And if there are no further questions, thanks for being with us, Representative Flexer.

And we now have hit the magic hour where we will start with our list of the public who have signed up, and we will alternate between the two lists. So now I would like to have Chris Tracy from Fairfield on House Bill 5533.

CHRISTOPHER TRACY: Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, Honorable Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, my name is Christopher Tracy representing the Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters, to speak in favor of House Bill 5533, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

that to make sure that we don't ever have any more Tom Beans with any other future incidents.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, and thanks for being with us.

TOM BEAN: Thank you for having me.

SENATOR HARTLEY: If there are no further questions, be well.

ERIC BROWN: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: So we'd like to invite Andy, or Andrew Matthews. Andrew? You brought props? So we have rules about props.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Oh, yes ma'am.

SENATOR HARTLEY: No, we didn't. I'm teasing you.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: (Inaudible).

SENATOR HARTLEY: That's okay. You just didn't bring the easel.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Good afternoon, Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, Distinguished Members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is Andrew Matthews. I'm the president of the Connecticut State Police Union. We represent about 892 troopers, 171 Sergeants, and 16 Master Sergeants.

I've already supplied you with written testimony for today, so I'm going to keep it --

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my opening remarks very brief, and I'm going to beat the three-minute clock.

I would say this, that dispatch consolidation was touted to be a cost-saving measure for the taxpayers, and to bring more efficiencies to the State Police. It has been anything but that. It's actually cost the taxpayers an average of 2500 hours of overtime for dispatchers per month, about 1250 bi-weekly, and about 70 shifts of overtime for our members of Sergeants who are an additional expense to the consolidated dispatch in just the Eastern District alone every month.

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And more importantly, the effects of what consolidated dispatch has done in the field -- it's not just simply taking your dispatch centers and putting it in one location. It's the effects of what consolidated dispatch has done to the field. It's essentially made our Troops substations. It has put a tremendous amount of strain on patrol, and it has reduced the police protection and patrol coverage that you once had. They claim that it would put troopers back on the road, and what it has essentially done is some Troops allow for the trooper to still remain inside because there's a lot of pressure, so that didn't happen, and now troopers have to travel outside their Troop areas to bring prisoners to your correctional Corrigan, Hartford, and New Haven.

So when we do that, we leave our patrol areas short staffed, and management doesn't want to bring troopers in to pay overtime, so no one

knows that they're not properly covering patrol. So your constituents are left with less police protection. That's what consolidated dispatch did in Connecticut for the State Police, and it has put our members and the public more at risk.

So with that said, I'll take questions.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Andy, for being here and for your written testimony as well. Questions?

Yes, Senator Osten.

SENATOR OSTEN: Good afternoon. How are you?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Senator. Good, and you ma'am?

SENATOR OSTEN: I'm good. I was wondering have you heard of --of troopers going to the homes of dispatchers to order them into work?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yes, ma'am.

SENATOR OSTEN: Is this because some people are trying to take time off of work so that they can actually sleep?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yeah, actually what I heard, and my knowledge is limited, but a trooper, a Sergeant was ordered to go to the residence of a dispatcher quickly. Formerly I think we had, with the four troops in Eastern District, Troup E, D, C, and K, we had about 25 dispatchers. We currently have 26; two are on medical leave, so with 24 -- what consolidated dispatch does

also is it requires more personnel, so the state has to hire more dispatchers, so before they implemented it, they didn't realize that 24 dispatchers with day leaves doesn't give the appropriate staffing level within consolidated dispatch, so they're mandating people to work double shifts repeatedly, sometimes four, five, and six days in a row, so people are exhausted.

This one particular female dispatcher is the -- the wife of a trooper. The Sergeant went to the home in uniform and his first words were something to the effect of "I'm sorry to tell you this..." and she panicked, thinking that her husband was hurt in the line of duty. The Sergeant was there to tell her that she was being ordered to come to work, and she hadn't been answering her phone.

So yes that happened. She is currently out on stress relief, medical leave I believe. To us, that's unacceptable. We shouldn't be going to people's homes. We have worked with the Commissioner, which we're very thankful. Commissioner Schriro has show great leadership within the last month. We met with her more in three weeks than we did with the previous Commissioner and the current Colonel than in three years. She is actively and probably exhaustingly traveling the state speaking to troopers in the field that do the job, both the men and the women that perform the job, which is where we should have started to make this successful, but we didn't have that. And she's -- yesterday she spent two and a half hours at Troop C in Tolland speaking directly with the

dispatchers, which I helped arrange, because the dispatchers were vocalizing that they needed to speak to leadership and express their frustrations and the flaws with the system.

So yes, to answer your question directly, that did occur. We don't find that acceptable. We're -- we understand that now management has made the decision that that will not be the practice in the future.

SENATOR OSTEN: Because I think if we need troopers on the road to -- to attend to criminal justice issues, we don't need to be ordering people in to do overtime.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Right.

SENATOR OSTEN: I would just say that. That to me is an unacceptable use of a sworn police officer in the state of Connecticut.

Do you -- have you been aware of any officers or troopers being dispatched without correct information?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yes, ma'am. A quick example: In Troop D, Danielson's area, an active domestic 911 call came in and it was dispatched as Highland Road, and it was actually Highland Drive, so when the troopers arrived, they looked -- peered through the window and saw two elderly people watching the evening news, and it took us 41 minutes to actually get to the correct address which was on the other side of town.

I mean I think what -- what really has to happen, if I may, is -- is the Legislators -- who would have ever thought that one person could make the decision without public hearings, legislative approval, and public input to basically close our barracks except during business hours, and shut down police services to the public. I don't -- I don't understand that. We're very thankful -- if it wasn't for Senator Williams, yourself, Senator Guglielmo, Representatives Orange, Flexer, Scribner, and Giegler, and Rovero, we wouldn't be here today, because the people I named have actively been supporting us. We've been -- the Union leadership and the members have been saying this for two years, but it's easy for the Colonel and the Commissioner to have quickly criticized us and say that we're overreacting when we had real live information. We could have prevented some of the political embarrassment and some of the embarrassment to our agency publicly, and potentially some harm to the public, if we had just all come to the table at the beginning to implement something.

It sounds really good when people say oh we can do consolidations or mergers; it's going to save money. It's cost the taxpayers close to \$5 million just for the Western and Eastern District equipment alone. In his initial proposal the Colonel stated -- it's in his report, his four-page report on Troop A, B, and L in the Western District, that it was only going to cost \$200,000 to -- for initial start-up cost. It's -- it bonded a least four to

five million dollars in equipment. It's costing hundreds of thousands of dollars a month in overtime, and when have you ever heard a Union complain that their members are making too much money in overtime.

There is really a genuine risk to the safety of our troopers in the field and the public, and we're happy to have the opportunity to come here and talk to you today.

SENATOR OSTEN: And when you have someone who is being incarcerated inside the Troop before they go to one of our prisons or jails, who -- how many people do you have available to -- to watch that particular person?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: If I may, my point earlier was that we have to step back and look at how dispatch in the Troops ran prior to the consolidation, and how it runs now. And to that point exactly, previously you had a very experienced dispatcher and a seasoned trooper on the desk together. Both immediately could answer 911 and routine calls, and immediately both could dispatch. In the east right now, you don't have that. He created a call taker position, which they take them -- the calls, and they type information into a computer that's sent to a dispatcher that's on the other side of the room. They can't immediately dispatch. We're seeing between a four and an eight minute delay in accurate information getting to the field to the point where troopers, when they get to the scene, it's already -- it's past, long gone. People have fled the scene.

When we used to take people into custody, to answer your question, we would come back to the Troop, and if an emergency happened, we could process the prisoner, put him in the cell. The dispatcher and the trooper could monitor us downstairs so if something happened they could quickly run down. They monitor the prisoner once we secure them in the cell. We immediately go back on patrol and work in our Troop area.

Now the -- the distinction is when I arrest someone, if they can't be -- first, when I arrest someone, the Troop is empty. So I have to pull two, and I can't publicly say at a public hearing --

SENATOR OSTEN: You're in a public hearing, so go ahead.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: -- yeah, I can't say -- I can't say how many troopers -- few troopers we have in 500 square miles covering 13 to 16 towns, but I'm sure most of the people here that we've had private conversations know that. When you take two troopers -- now mandatory to pull two troopers off patrol to come to the Troop to process a prisoner, you're leaving the constituents with not proper staffing levels to be able to respond to it. Troop D is the reason -- one of the reasons why we had the 1248 in the statute mandate the number of troopers, but also increase minimum patrols at Troop D in Danielson because it took us 20 minutes to get to Heather Messenger's house in

Chaplin while she was being brutally murdered on the phone as the troopers listened. Because the trooper that was assigned to those three towns -- one trooper covering three towns, was on the adjoining patrol three towns away in the other direction backing up another trooper at a domestic.

What consolidated dispatch has done, this Union has argued for 33 years that we're understaffed on minimum patrols. If you want consolidated dispatch to work, just understand you're going to have to increase your dispatcher staffing by about 10 to 15 people for each district. You're going to have to increase minimum patrols finally after 33 years, and it's going to cost you more money if that's what you want to do. And know that it's going to take away people that used to sit on the desk that had a lot of experience. I don't -- I'm not trying to insult anyone, but someone that worked at Starbuck's or Wal-Mart last month, they don't really understand the concept. They go through an eight to ten week crash course on dispatching. They go 30 working days, which is a month and half, on the schedule at the Troop doing a field training. And then suddenly we're letting them put the lives of your families in their hands.

And what's happening, no fault of theirs, is they're just simply inexperienced. They're not asking the right questions; the right information isn't getting to the troopers in the field, and one of the -- I'm sorry, I kind of got carried away --

SENATOR OSTEN: I'm okay with that.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: -- but I'm very passionate about it. And one of the -- one of the biggest problems is before the experienced trooper and dispatcher would immediately dispatch you, and you would be at someone's residence within minutes, right? Now what we have is the call taker will input the information and send it across the room. They don't even communicate with the dispatcher, but now the dispatcher has to read it, and then they dispatch a trooper.

And a lot of times, as the troopers are going to the scene, the dispatchers are so busy because, in the Eastern District, that four Troops, you used to have two people on each desk with the exception of Montville because they're so -- the volume of calls and work at Troop B in Montville is just so much more. They had two dispatchers and one trooper formerly, so that's nine people. Now we have nine people in one center at Troop C in Tolland, people that don't know the Troop areas geographically, don't know the frequent flyers that we constantly deal with, and they're so overwhelmed. We have four call takers and five dispatchers except for on midnights. Somehow we decided -- the command staff decided we would go to seven. We have four call takers -- three call takers and four dispatchers. I guess maybe savings? But here's the problem: When more than one critical incident happens at one time within one -- more than -- and even within more than one Troop, we're going to have

a major problem, especially during inclement weather.

So I know that was kind of a lot, but hopefully I answered your question.

SENATOR OSTEN: Sure. And are you aware of any times when -- because there are a couple of really -- I mean there are regularly, any -- any incident that you go to, there's a potential for a huge problem, but from my perspective there are really a couple of them that are worse than any others: domestics and traffic stops. Are you aware of any troopers that have been dispatched to traffic stops that did not get the correct information and thus went on their own to a situation that could potentially be catastrophic?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: I've heard of not only traffic stops, but people are being sent to residence with -- saying that it's not a severe incident, and they're responding with their guard down. Most of the time, if we're getting called to something that doesn't sound alarming, and they walk into a domestic violence with weapons, and they weren't aware of it. I mean mistakes happen, but we've also -- look, Troop K and Troop D in the Eastern District handle 41 percent of all domestic violences for the State Police. We all know that domestic violences are a dangerous proposition to be dealing with. We don't -- people don't realize a lot of times troopers go alone because we don't have the proper staffing to back up fellow troopers.

I think it's important for people to understand the Colonel may not believe that a Troop is a police department first, you know 13 to 16 towns, and that people frequently walk in and ask for help because they don't have transportation, or they live in the area, you know, they walk to the Troop.

Victims of domestic violences, women that were formerly battered by their spouse and are divorced -- myself and Representative Orange met one at Troop K. She walks up to the Troop and she says now she's fearful. She exchanges her five-year-old son with her ex-husband who was beating her, and she has been hospitalized, and she uses the Troop as an exchange point for the obvious reasons. Well now she comes to the Troop and the door is locked, the lights are off, and the building's alarmed, and nobody's home, and her fear is that her ex-spouse is going to realize that there's not a trooper around anymore and that something could potentially happen, whether its harassment, or threatening, or an assault.

So when you walk up to certain Troops, you know, this is what you see.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you for (inaudible).

ANDREW MATTHEWS: I don't -- I don't know how this is providing better quality service and being more efficient when people have to stand outside in the cold to report and wait for a trooper to report a crime, and wait 20 minutes. The -- the one thing that I think is really important

is the Colonel, you know, his ambitions probably were -- were well intentioned in his view, but he proposed this plan in 2000 and 2005 when he was formerly on the job before he retired, and at both times the administration at the time researched it and said that it does not work here with the State Police, and they rejected the notion.

The theory of putting troopers back out on patrol -- put aside for a minute that we think there's a real value to having a trooper in the building. When people say Police Department, they think they're going to go in and see a police officer, or answering a phone because they do the job and they understand it, or there's a criminal question. Put that aside for a minute. You could have left the Troops open to the public 24/7 and used two experienced civilian dispatchers, and let the Troop continue to run efficiently the way it was. Our Troops were already consolidated. We went from one Troop, the average Troop having 14 towns of covering 500 square miles, to one with 52.

So it's not just -- look, we don't care if the calls, the dispatch calls, 911 and routine calls, are answered in India. We really don't care; that's not the point. The point is, we need to provide public safety; that's the most important function of government, right? And to us, to the Union, what's really important is the safety of our members. We really believe there's -- it's coming soon where -- we don't -- someone mentioned earlier (I forgot who), but

mentioned that while in January of 2015. I don't know that we have until January of 2015. Windham, aside from that there was some human error, that would not -- Windham incident -- it would not have taken the State Police an hour and nineteen minutes for a trooper to arrive at an active home invasion if Troop K was dispatching that under the former setup. It would have never happened. So, sorry -- I've been waiting for this day for two years.

SENATOR OSTEN: I -- I wouldn't have been able to tell that at all.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Sorry.

SENATOR OSTEN: So in regards to someone going to an on -- an on-the-side-of-the-highway traffic stop where a passerby was -- my information is that that there was a phone call that happened to dispatch where the license plate was given in a dispatch, and a -- and an officer was dispatched to that, and it turned out to be a wanted felon in a stolen vehicle. One trooper responded. I -- I find that personally unacceptable. I'll tell you right now, I care about whether or not the dispatchers are dispatching from India or not. I want American jobs and American jobs here in Connecticut

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Oh no, I was -- yeah, I was --

SENATOR OSTEN: I'm just going to say that for the record --

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yes, ma'am.

SENATOR OSTEN: -- because that's clearly something that I'd like to see, but I don't think that this, you know, and I've heard that -- and I am for consolidation and regionalization when it works, but I want to make sure that something works and is accurately done. I don't like putting people at risk, and I think we have put people at risk, both the people that work for dispatch and State Police, and constituents that count on you to be ready and out there. So from my perspective, we have to do something well before 2015. I'd like to see us do it fairly shortly because I think we have to.

And on an indulgence, I'd like to ask one question that's not related to this, that has to do with Resident Troopers. Are you aware that Resident Troopers' overtime, disregarding the fringe benefit piece of it, but that Resident Troopers are being told that First Selectman can't hire their Resident Trooper for overtime, even if the towns are paying for that?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yes, ma'am. I just learned that this weekend. It had to do with during a snowstorm, they have what's called Snow Patrol. When a Resident Trooper town, a First Selectman or Woman requests that their Resident Trooper work, typically in the past that wasn't an issue. And honestly it helps patrol, because the few people that are on patrol are covering a larger area, and there's a lot of accidents. So it helps when the Resident Trooper is on. We just learned that command staff in the

eastern part of the state -- I believe it comes from a Major down, that the Resident Troopers will not be allowed to work on Snow Patrol. They will not be able to work on those days when the Town Selectman or Woman requests it.

SENATOR OSTEN: Even though the towns are willing to pay for that overtime?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: And paying 100 percent.

SENATOR OSTEN: And paying 100 percent?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yes.

SENATOR OSTEN: Thank you. Thank you very much.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yes, ma'am.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you. Further questions?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Thank you for your leadership.

SENATOR OSTEN: Thank you.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Representative Giegler.

REP. GIEGLER: Thank you, and thank you so much for being here, and your helpfulness in the last couple of years and everything that was going on in the western part of the state, and I appreciate your interest and your cooperation with those of us that reside there.

A couple of questions that I have: If you could just take us through the process. I don't believe that when we had Troop A then we had these -- a two-step. I thought when you call in, you would get a dispatcher. You wouldn't go to a call-in --

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Right.

REP. GIEGLER: -- and who gets -- transfers your call to a dispatcher? Is that correct?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Right. For some reason the Colonel started in the west, and he merged Troop A in Southbury, Troop B in North Canaan, and Troop L; the hub is Troop L. When he did that, he quickly removed the dispatch consoles from the Troops. Our belief -- our belief is that he did that to make sure that it would cost a tremendous amount of money to reverse that process, therefore it wouldn't happen.

With the help of Senator Williams and Representative Flexer speaking directly, I believe, with the Governor's Office, they made a request that for the time being -- this was back in I believe October or November of 2013 -- that he ask them to please hold off. We can -- we're happy to say that in the east none of the consoles have been removed in case the process is reversed.

But in the -- in the west, what's odd to us is that Troop B, L, and A formerly had two individuals answering 911 routine calls, and answering on the radio to the troopers in the

field. That's six people. When he merged it into Troop L, he only has three dispatchers, one for each Troop, and one trooper. That's only four people, and he added a Sergeant to the dispatch console area that does not get involved in answering calls or dispatching the troopers in the field.

So in the west for some reason, we don't have call takers. We went from six to four. Now that may have changed in the last month or so, I'm not sure, because we keep -- every time we bring up an important issue, somehow it gets tweaked and gets changed, so it takes our argument away often. But the way I recall it is we went from six people to four, and the -- and the same volume of calls for four people that used to be handled by six.

So when you call Troop L in Litchfield now, or A or B, it goes to Litchfield, you'll get the dispatcher that's on that console at that day. But one of the problems with that, ma'am, is this just happened recently. The dispatcher on the console for Troop B in North Canaan heard the dispatcher at Troop A getting overwhelmed, where in the past they had two people at Troop A to do it. They were getting overwhelmed, so the dispatcher from B switched over to A from their console to help dispatch for an emergency. They forgot to go back to the Troop B channel, and troopers in the field were calling in and no one was answering.

So there's -- there's another flaw with dispatch consolidation. Honestly, our position

is it should be reversed back to the way it used to be. Each Troop is an individual Troop. It's the police department for 13 towns. That's what we believe. Unfortunately for the west, I -- I personally see it as a -- not -- it's going to be harder to do it in the west now because it will cost so much money. I'm hopeful that that happens with your leadership, so.

SENATOR GIEGLER: Also just to add to that, with the taking out of the dispatch center of Troop A, I've heard that the, you know, when Newtown occurred, we did not have the dispatch center up and running at Troop A which, of course, is Exit 14, and that when troopers were dispatched to Sandy Hook that there was a lot of confusion of exactly where Sandy Hook School was. I don't know if you can confirm that?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yeah. I was -- I was at Troop A the day after Sandy Hook, and they were still dismantling the consoles in the Troop, which I thought was sort of odd because something just traumatic happened and there was a lot going on.

If you had Troop A set up the way it formerly was, you would have experienced people that know the area very well, and you would have had people chiming in on Troop A's radio, both on and off-duty troopers and they would have given them directions because they know the way. Well consolidation had already occurred. So a lot of troopers in the field were trying to figure out how to get there on their own, and

they were coming from the eastern part of the state. They just knew go to Exit 16, but when troopers got off at Exit 16, and they were from areas not from that area, and they weren't familiar, they didn't have the valuable resource of experienced people on the desk to tell them oh take this turn, you know, everybody stop talking on the radio, this is where you should go.

We had troopers getting off the highway thinking, if I'm following -- I see you, and you're going that way, and I think I -- I'm going the right way, then I'll turn around and follow you, but you might not know where you're going, too. I've heard that a lot from the troopers in the field, so, now of course, everything I tell you today will be disputed by the command staff as how, you know, nothing I'm saying is accurate, but this is live information coming from the troopers in the field, so.

SENATOR GIEGLER: I know because I've -- I've met with some of the troopers in the area, you know, and there's been great concern on the staffing levels as well, because I know how many, you know, we have on the highway, and I know when I see x-number in a certain location, through my mind I'm knowing how many are left, you know, that have to cover this pretty large District.

But I know one of the other concerns is that there's a lot of individuals that have a concern of calling 911 because they feel it's

an emergency line, and that maybe the call, even though it's important, and they may need assistance, doesn't warrant the 911 connotation. . But if you call the phone number to the Troop, you don't get anything. So what is the alternative for -- for these individuals that may be on the road, may be distressed, but they don't feel it warrants 911.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: If I may, we -- we believe that we used to perform optimal service to the public. We think that consolidated dispatch has actually reduced the quality of the service we provide, and I'll give you a quick example on your point.

In May of 2012, reporter Mark Davis from Channel 8 asked the Colonel a question, because the issue came up where when there's a flood of 911 calls coming in, Troop A has a rollover, and there's 40 people on their phones calling in. What would happen is, he's -- this is a quote from him, he said, "When a flood of calls come in from an accident, and there is only four operators, they can't handle 40 calls at once." So he's talking about the four dispatchers in the console area which is -- which is true, because when you only had two at Troop A, you know, you pick up and there's only two people, but you quickly would go through the 911s. The problem we're seeing now is, you put three Troops together, and there's only four people answering calls, and something happens at Troop A, and all the 911 calls are coming into one location. If there's a domestic violence, and someone's being beaten

in Troop B's area, and they're mixed in. He said it also in a news article; I'll quote him. They were talking about how a large number of 911 calls come into consolidated Troop L dispatch center in Litchfield are being dropped or going unanswered are also -- is also being investigated, the Colonel said. Says quote, from the Colonel, "That may have occurred." He acknowledged, "If people stay on the phone, calls will be answered."

So basically what we're telling the public is, hey if you call 911 and the phone just keeps ringing, stay on the phone and we'll be with you when we get a chance because we have fewer people answering 911 calls. That just doesn't -- so either we're waiting for them to hang up because they just get sick of waiting. I talked to a lot of the dispatchers. They think many members from the public don't call 911 as much any more to report incidents, and one of the reasons is has nothing to do with consolidated dispatches. It's illegal to talk on your phone when you're driving down the highway. So I think we've seen a slight reduction in 911 calls, but the point is, when people call 911, we can't tell the public that we're giving them better quality police service and we're more efficient if we don't have enough people to answer the phone, or when the people that answer the phone don't get the information into the field quick enough. Four to six minutes can mean the difference between life or death. So if there is a delay in information because you don't have enough people or not enough qualified people then, you

know -- but they'll never claim that it has anything to do with consolidated dispatch, so.

REP. GIEGLER: I know you were here earlier when Representative Rovero referred to, you know, seeing the sign on the highway and following the signs to the Troop. Well, you know, with Troop A, it's sitting on 84, and also the -- the sign is there. It says Troop 84. It also says travel services, which is also inclusive in Troop A, but we all know that that's nonexistent now, especially, you know, after the banking hours, and not on weekends, not on holidays, not on evenings, which I think is a big problem, because coming in from New York State we see a lot of activity, you know, in the Danbury area coming in from New York State and going back into New York State, and I think it's really -- I think it's -- there's going to be a problem that, you know, people are on the highway. There's so much -- there's a continual accident on there, and it really involves a lot of the -- the troopers that are assigned to that -- that area. So we really are being very -- put in a very short-handed situation in that area, and I -- I think it's really unfortunate that, you know, it's come to that, because I really think they have put our whole area at risk. Especially, you know, some have municipal police departments, but then we also have quite a few Residency Trooper Programs in that area, so there's a -- or complement, so you don't really have the draw that you might have like Danbury who has a Municipal Police Department.

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ANDREW MATTHEWS: I know and one quick point on the Resident Trooper Program in your Troop area in New Fairfield. When the new -- in the history of the State Police, we've never taken such action without a special ops plan. This is the first time in the history of the State Police we took such action and we never even had a plan drafted. That seems odd to us.

But when New Fairfield made an arrest, the trooper was required to go to Litchfield. The Selectman complained that their trooper that they're paying 70 percent of was gone half the shift because they had to drive to Litchfield to process their prisoner. So the department came up with a new policy, and they said well if a Resident Trooper gets an arrest, that Patrol Trooper will drive their prisoner, relay him up to the Troop and process him, so the Resident Trooper can stay in the town, but then that puts more stress on the few troopers that are left. I mean, we could stay here all night and talk about it, but I don't think you want to do that.

REP. GIEGLER: I don't -- I don't want to tie up as well, because I know you know a lot of the concerns that we have.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yeah.

REP. GIEGLER: And I know that you had a willingness to meet with us --

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Sure.

REP. GIEGLER: -- at Troop A, but I also feel encouraged by the Commissioner in that she had put a hold on the central, proceeding with that for now until she can really look at it. And I don't know if she's had an opportunity to get to the west side, but I have definitely invited her to do so, and so I really appreciate all your assistance, and I know that we'll be talking again about this very subject.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yeah, thank you. We're -- we're really encouraged by Commissioner Schriro's leadership style. The mere fact that she is actually listening to the men and women that do the job to try to understand it, both dispatchers, civilian employees, and troopers, speaks volumes of her commitment to public safety. I think she's about to -- she'll report back to you and the Governor's Office on exactly what her thoughts are, but we -- she and I have a great working relationship. I spoke to her this morning before I came here, and we either text or talk, you know, quite a bit, so she's -- she's a great leader. It's -- I think it's actually beneficial that she was in a former trooper; I think it goes a long way, so, yeah.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Representative Giegler.

Senator Guglielmo.

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In the -- I had an opportunity to talk with a lead dispatcher over the weekend, and she

indicated to me that some of the people working for her were basically forced to work 90 hours of overtime in a two-week period. Is that something you're familiar with?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yes, I -- I know that there are some dispatchers that are bi-weekly receiving 90 hours of overtime, and much of -- many of those hours are mandated because they simply don't have the staffing. So what I did was I reached out to the Commissioner, and this was all to keep troopers off the desk and out in the patrol. We've made it to try to help relieve them, we've worked with the Commissioner to have troopers back inside --

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: Yeah.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: -- to be call takers, dispatchers, and lead dispatchers.

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: Yeah, that's what I was told by this same person, yes.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yeah, and talk about not cost savings. They just assigned a Master Sergeant -- they created another position of over \$100,000 annually, to consolidate a dispatch center in Troop C in Tolland because they need the oversight and the supervision, so it's another added cost.

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: I was also told that I think last week, Thursday or Friday, was almost a walkout of dispatchers because of the tension and the

stress that's all this overtime and problems have caused.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yeah, we have an Employee Assistance Program. They have pretty much set up shop there in the last couple of weeks. The dispatchers are not only exhausted, but their morale is very low because they feel that command staff -- they're intimidated and fearful of speaking up, so I worked with the Commissioner and arranged a meeting. She spent two and a half hours with them yesterday, both talking to the day shift and the evening shift, and I give her a lot of credit for that.

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: Yeah.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: She didn't bring command staff with her, so the civilian dispatchers were able to speak freely and tell her. The only way you fix the problems is if you have the ability to speak freely.

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: Yeah, I -- I heard that was supposed to happen yesterday, so that did actually happen?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: It did happen. I was there.

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: Okay.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: I saw her, yes.

SENATOR GUGLIELMO: Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Andy.

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SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Senator.

Yes, Representative Rovero.

REP. ROVERO: Mr. Softie, you can call me.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Mikutel isn't here.

REP. ROVERO: You know I think what bothers me most about this -- what bothers me most about this entire consolidation is the fact that nobody's taken corrective action. You know, if we're in business and we try something, or as a parent, or just as a general person, we try something and in quick order we find out that it's not working, we don't let pride get in our way. We go back to the other way, or we try some other system. I think that's what bothered me the most. I have not heard one person have anything positive to say about this consolidation except maybe the person who instituted it, and yet we try to make a little change here to make somebody happy, or a little change there to make somebody happy. But nobody has said let's go back to doing what we were doing because it was a lot better than our new idea. And I think that bothers me. I mean that's -- I don't care whether you're talking about patrolmen, you're talking about ordinary citizens, or anything. Nobody is happy with the situation, yet we let it continue. And I'm going to be honest with you. I have a lot of respect for the new Commission -- Commissioner, but I honestly hope that this goes through legislation so it doesn't happen again under another new Commissioner. Because this bothers

me. How can we make this mistake, and let it continue, and do nothing about it? And that's just what's happening here. So I hope it goes through legislation process, and not just through the Commissioner. I'd like to see them take the first hand and change it over right away, but I'd like to see it in the form of some kind of legislation so that it doesn't happen again.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Representative Rovero. Seeing no further questions, thank you.

Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't see you there, Representative Nicastro. I didn't know that you were waiting to speak. By all means, have the floor.

REP. NICASTRO: Thank you, Madam Chair. Officer Matthews, nice to see you again.

ANDREW MATTHEWS: (Inaudible.)

REP. NICASTRO: A couple of questions: What happened up in Newtown, how many State Police did we have respond to that by chance, do you know?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Over the -- over the five to six-day period, I think it was well over 250 troopers; Initial responders, people that were directly or significantly impacted or involved in it was around 175.

REP. NICASTRO: We had 250 troopers respond to that over a week?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Over the five to six-day -- six-day period, yes.

REP. NICASTRO: Let me ask you a question, if you can answer it: For those officers that were there shortly after the massacre, how many of those officers, if any -- and I don't know, that's why I'm asking, are receiving treatment for post-traumatic stress symptoms?

ANDREW MATTHEWS: Yes, we actually submitted written testimony in support of the bill on PTSD; I think it's 5533, House Bill. I would -- in my estimation, we have a Peer Support Program; State Troopers offer peer support. We have an EAP. I would -- I would venture to say that there's about 60 to 80 people that are actively getting treatment. Based on what I heard from the officer from Newtown earlier, we're very fortunate to be employees of the State of Connecticut because we have a different setup. We would never have something occur to us like that that would shock the reasonable person's conscious to that level. We're very fortunate to have that. We have a sick leave bank.

We -- we have supported the -- we support the bill because we believe that any injury, whether it's physical or mental that occurs in the workplace, the employer should be responsible for curing that employee, because we want them to remain a productive member of the agency. So we think it's important for the



CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION

Good morning, Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee.

My name is Andrew Matthews and I am the President of the Connecticut State Police Union, which represents approximately 1,079 Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants. Today we are here to speak **IN SUPPORT OF:**

PROPOSED SENATE BILL NO. 426

AN ACT SUSPENDING AND EVALUATING THE CONSOLIDATION OF DISPATCH CENTERS WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE POLICE

The State Police Union supports this Bill because consolidated dispatch within the State Police has put the safety of the public and our membership more at risk by creating situations where Troops are closed to the public, Troop areas do not have sufficient patrol coverage to respond to emergency calls in a timely manner, and because consolidating dispatch operations has created significant delays in information being transmitted into the field, resulting in increased response times to emergencies. Moreover, consolidated dispatch cost taxpayers millions of dollars in equipment and has created an average of 2,000 hours a month in overtime. Suspending and reversing the negative effects of consolidated dispatch and allowing time to carefully evaluate and correct the flaws will ultimately enhance public safety.

In May of 2012, the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) began consolidating State Police dispatch operations at Troop A (Southbury), Troop B (North Canaan) and Troop L (Litchfield). In September of 2013, DESPP merged Troop D (Danielson), Troop K (Colchester), Troop E (Montville) and Troop C (Tolland). This dramatic departure from a dispatch system that had worked well for decades occurred without holding public hearings, seeking legislative approval or even the input of the Troopers in the field. Again, the Union must stress that without any input beyond a handful of high ranking members of DESPP decided it was in the best interest of public safety to install alarm systems in our Troops, lock the doors and turn the lights off during the evening hours -- closing the only police department available for numerous towns in some areas. DESPP did this claiming that the consolidations would "achieve efficiencies and cost savings", would "redeploy sworn Troopers back to patrol", would "improve emergency communications and dispatch functions" and would "enhance public safety." Unfortunately, after much evidence to the contrary, many are beginning to realize that there is little truth to these claims.

In order to fully understand the drastic change in service; one must understand how State Police Troop dispatching functioned prior to the mergers compared to the new consolidated dispatch operation. Prior to the consolidation each Troop had two experienced individuals who were



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familiar with the geographical areas answering routine and 911 calls with the ability to immediately dispatch Troopers to calls for service. Now, newly hired and inexperienced dispatchers are not familiar with the Troop areas they are responsible for and "call takers" only answer calls and input the information into a computer. The information entered by call takers is sent to the dispatchers minutes later and only then are Troopers dispatched to calls. Call takers do not have the capability of dispatching new information during an emergency directly to the Troopers out in the field. Moreover, if more than one critical incident occurs at a time, there will likely be catastrophic failure.

The impact of prisoner transport – and its impact on patrol levels – is another important difference between consolidated and traditional dispatch operations. Prior to consolidation, Troopers would make arrests and transport the prisoners back to the Troop for processing. Once a prisoner was processed, the Trooper would return to their nearby patrol area. Under the new system, two patrol Troopers are forced to return to the Troop to process the prisoners and if not released, Troopers are required to travel well outside their Troop areas to transport prisoners to Hartford, New Haven, Corrigan or York Correctional. This practice often reduces our minimum patrol staffing levels, affects our ability to provide proper back up and creates longer response times.

The State Police Union leadership is opposed to this consolidation because it has and continues to negatively affect telephone services, police and emergency dispatch functions, response times, as well as Troop staffing levels. Notably, some of our Troops are no longer adequate safe havens for victims of domestic violence, sexual assaults or other crimes against citizens that need the immediate intervention of a State Trooper. For example, it recently came to our attention that for years a victim of domestic violence had exchanged custody for visitation of her five-year-old son with her ex-husband/batterer at a State Police barracks. However, one day as she arrived at the Troop, and as she approached the front door she noticed that the interior lights were off and as she attempted to open the door to the lobby, surprisingly she discovered the door was locked and that no Troopers were on the property. Sadly, she stated that she feared that when her ex-husband discovered the State Police Troops were no longer occupied by Troopers, he would continue threatening her and even try to assault her.

In closing, for nearly two years, the State Police Union has attempted to discuss the real risks associated with dispatch consolidations and our genuine concerns for public safety and the safety of all State Troopers. Unfortunately, the Union leadership and the membership were ignored. Our invaluable experience could have contributed to improving dispatch operations rather than the systematic failures of the dispatch plan that was implemented. However, we are optimistic that newly-appointed Commissioner Dora Schriro will provide the leadership that the State Police to address these problems. In fact, in three short weeks, the Union leadership has met with Commissioner Schriro on three occasions – which is more than the former Commissioner



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and current Colonel have done in three years. The Commissioner is carefully analyzing consolidated dispatch, she has traveled around the state and has generously allowed Troopers the opportunity to provide her with critical information to ensure we succeed. As such, we remain convinced that the most suitable way to avoid any further risk to the public and Troopers is to cease implementing and supporting a failing plan, but rather seek the input of the men and women who perform front line patrol and discuss any potential consequences of the consolidation with them to prevent or limit any further exposure.

We thank the committee for your consideration on this important issue and would be happy to answer any questions.

March 11, 2014
UNION

CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE

Andrew Matthews, Esq. – President



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**Testimony of Representative Flexer to the
Public Safety Committee
March 11, 2014**

Good Morning Representative Dargan, Representative Giegler, Senator Hartley, Senator Guglielmo, and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 426, *An Act Suspending and Evaluating the Consolidation of Dispatch Centers Within the Division of State Police.*

I am here today to voice my strong opposition to the continued consolidation of State Police Dispatch Centers across the state, but with emphasis on this issue as it relates to the relocation of the dispatch center utilized by Troop D in Danielson, Connecticut. I am asking the committee to reverse consolidation.

Last year, dispatchers were moved from stations in not only Danielson, but from Colchester and Montville as well; into the main dispatch center in Tolland. Not only has this consolidation increased wait times for non-emergency services, such as fingerprinting, or the reporting of crimes and accidents, but it has, dangerously, increased the response times in cases of emergency calls.

Troop D functions as a local police department to multiple towns, only one town in Windham County, Plainfield, is fully covered by a local police department and two towns, Putnam and Windham, which is covered by troop K, have departments that cover the central portions of their communities but not the entire town. Since shifting the main dispatch center to Troop C in Tolland, the people now in charge of dispatching state police to Danielson and surrounding areas are geographically unfamiliar with the region, and in turn, cannot direct officers to certain areas in the most efficient manner, either distance or time-wise.

In the months since consolidated dispatch has been rolled out in eastern Connecticut there have been numerous serious incidents where state police response was either delayed or simply unavailable. At Troop D alone those incidents have ranged from the inability to report a road rage incident to a sexual assault being unreported. These incidents have largely occurred because the Troop D barracks are now only accessible to the public between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Troop D, like many police departments, is viewed to be a safe haven, a place to go in an emergency. Since dispatch was consolidated last fall, the barracks is hardly open outside these hours. There has been an effort to improve access outside these hours but it simply isn't working. I have personally stopped by Troop D more than a dozen times outside of normal business hours and have only found the doors to the barracks to be open once.

On January 20th, 2014, there was a home invasion in Windham. Inside the house were two children, who upon hearing someone trying to get inside, locked themselves in a bathroom, and as children are instructed to do from an early age, they called 911. The family in question resides only minutes from a police station, but due to their location, state troopers are in charge of responding to area 911 calls. The officers arrived an hour and a half later. Upon the arrival of the police, the responding officers were "disturbed" at the amount of time that had gone by between the initial 911 call and when they were asked to respond to the home invasion. If the dispatch centers had not been consolidated, officers could have been informed of the situation, and deployed to the home in a timely manner, not only possibly catching the thieves in the act, but more importantly, ensuring the safety of the two children trapped inside of their own home.

Another issue with the shifting of the location of Troop D dispatch to Troop C in Tolland is that Troop D is no longer considered to be a 24-hour force by many residents of northeastern Connecticut. Due to Troop D acting as a local police force for Killingly and other area towns, this puts the citizens of these towns at an immediate disadvantage in comparison to others. Whereas other towns will have an almost immediate response time, the people of northeastern Connecticut will regularly have to wait for someone not familiar with the area to send help, which could easily result in a response time would be completely unacceptable for an emergency situation.

State Police officials claim this move has made overall operations more efficient, and even keeps troopers and civilians safer, all while the state police union says otherwise. Response times have increased anywhere from 10-20 minutes, and union officials have not wavered from their position that not only is this system less than efficient, but that it consistently puts lives at risk, particularly in the area served by Troop D. I have heard this first hand from numerous troopers that work in eastern Connecticut.

This bill should effectively erase the changes made as of July 1st, 2013, and revert to the extremely functional system that had been in place for decades before, allowing for dispatchers familiar with the area to be in charge of sending out troopers on calls, resulting in shorter response times, an increase in the level of overall safety, and possibly most important: peace of mind for the citizens of northeastern Connecticut, knowing that if they found themselves in an emergency situation, they would be attended to and taken care of within a reasonable and timely fashion.

While I have been hopeful that the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection would reconsider the consolidation of state police dispatch services, I do not believe the legislature can wait any longer for the department to take action. This legislation is critical to continuing the mission to keep our constituents safe, and your action on suspending and reversing consolidation will guarantee their protection. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the
Public Safety & Security Committee
March 11, 2014**

**Re: SUPPORT – SB-426, AN ACT SUSPENDING AND EVALUATING THE
CONSOLIDATION OF DISPATCH CENTERS WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE
POLICE**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) *supports* SB-426, which suspends the consolidation of dispatch centers within the Division of State Police pending an evaluation of the consolidation efforts.

Thank you for responding to COST's concerns regarding this issue and raising a bill to suspend the consolidation. As discussed, the state Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) is moving forward with plans to reduce the number of state police dispatch centers in the state from 12 to 5. In the western part of the state, dispatch functions for Troops A and B were moved to Troop L in Litchfield. Earlier this year, state police dispatchers from Troops D in Danielson, K in Colchester and E in Montville were moved to a consolidated dispatch center at Troop C in Tolland. The consolidation, intended as a cost-savings measure, drew widespread criticism from Windham County residents and town officials. The following concerns have been noted in the press and by local officials:

Locked doors

As part of the move in September, the trooper who had been manning the front desk was initially reassigned as a "local patrol officer" and sent out on the road, a move that left the barracks locked for much of the day and night shifts. An exterior phone, linked to Tolland, was required to gain entry. Residents stopping at the barracks reported long wait times for non-emergency matters, including being fingerprinted, reporting crimes or filling out accident reports.

Response Times

In Killingly, local officials have stated that they are hearing from troopers that response times are up and that people are waiting at the barracks for 10, 15 or 20 minutes for someone. It reportedly took state police 90 minutes to respond to a Windham home invasion in which two teens locked themselves in a bathroom for safety. There was also an incident when it took a trooper from Troop D in Danielson 41 minutes to respond to an active domestic incident because he was



dispatched to Highland Road instead of Highland Drive. Response times have suffered due to lack of experience and knowledge of the area and because there are now call-takers relaying information to dispatchers instead of immediately dispatching services. In addition, troopers are now leaving to transport prisoners to prisons in Montville and Niantic because there is no one at the barracks to watch over them. Purportedly, a small number of dispatchers have been required to work multiple double shifts to meet call demand.

In addition, state police consolidated the dispatch centers of barracks in Litchfield, Southbury and Canaan in northwestern Connecticut into one center in Litchfield. Each center had one dispatcher and one trooper around the clock. Now, the Litchfield center has three dispatchers and one trooper around the clock, resulting in a decrease of two troopers answering the phones per shift. Reassigning troopers who are familiar with the community and geographic area also creates concerns that response times may be negatively impacted.

In response to concerns, there have been some adjustments made. After reviewing the number of walk-in "customers," the troop commander decided to reopen the doors of Troop D during the day and assign a trooper to be inside the barracks whenever possible. A buzzer system was installed in the barracks' lobby, letting troopers know when a resident required help.

No Documented Cost Savings

Although consolidation has been touted as a cost savings measure, it has been difficult to quantify the cost savings and many local officials have suggested that the costs have increased.

COST recommends that the evaluation required pursuant to SB-426 includes an assessment of:

- 1) The impact of consolidation on emergency response times;
- 2) How prisoner transport can be accomplished without locking entry to centers;
- 3) How the state will engage municipal officials as partners in decisions about changes in staffing and consolidation; and
- 4) A cost-benefit analysis to determine whether consolidation will result in costs/savings and the overall impact on public safety in the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of SB-426.

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State of Connecticut
SENATOR DONALD E. WILLIAMS, JR.
Twenty-ninth District
President Pro Tempore

Testimony

In Support of
SB 426 AA Suspending and Evaluating the Consolidation of Dispatch Centers within the
Division of State Police

Public Safety and Security Committee

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of **SB 426, AA Suspending and Evaluating the Consolidation of Dispatch Centers within the Division of State Police**. This bill would suspend the current administrative process of consolidation of police dispatch centers within the Division of State Police.

The consolidation plan—which was a department initiative and was not approved here in the legislature—would, if fully carried out, reduce the number of dispatch centers from 12 to 5. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) had originally hoped that the plan would result in greater efficiency and cost savings, however, it is not clear that the consolidation will result in economies of scale that will produce savings or faster response times; in fact it is possible that the consolidation will have the opposite effect.

While the consolidation plan was well intentioned, it failed to take into account the reality that many of these Troops function as local police departments serving many towns. The combination of shutting down troop barracks in the evening hours and closing down local dispatch service has changed the local connection between the Troop and the towns in the service area, and not for the better.

As a result of the consolidation plan, State Troopers no longer take phone calls from the public. In addition, the dispatch function is now separate from the call-taker function. Prior to the change at Troop D in Danielson, a State Trooper and a trained dispatcher would staff the call desk together. Both had the authority to immediately dispatch an officer to the scene. Now, at the consolidated dispatch center in Tolland, newly trained call-takers accept calls from the public and enter information into a database. A dispatcher is then notified after the information is entered and then makes a determination about whether or not to dispatch an officer to the scene.

It is difficult to see how this multi-step process creates efficiency or quicker response time. New call-takers are not given the authority or the ability to dispatch a trooper and may not be familiar with local geographical areas.

A recent incident in Windham highlighted an adverse outcome of the consolidation efforts. On January 20 of this year, two siblings were at home when burglars broke into the home. Several calls to the consolidated emergency dispatch failed to result in a timely police response due to confusion at the dispatch center as to the location of the home. Ninety minutes of no response elapsed. Luckily no one was hurt due to the intervention of a neighbor who heard the minors calling for help.

I would propose an addition to this legislation. We should not only halt the consolidation, but reverse that process. We should instruct the department to restore local dispatch in those Troops that serve areas where the majority of towns do not have local police departments, and by doing so restore 24-hour coverage at the barracks. The barracks should not be locked with the lights out when local residents need the emergency refuge and safety of the troop barracks.

When the department decided to pursue consolidation they overlooked an important consideration that argues in favor of local dispatch. More regional dispatch centers results in greater security for the residents of Connecticut. When there are only five such centers instead of 12, the impact of the loss of any one or more centers places a much greater burden on the remaining centers, and could leave vast areas of the state without the protection of public safety dispatch. Such loss could result from deliberate sabotage and disruption, or severe weather damage from hurricanes or tornados. Twelve regional dispatch centers are the equivalent of a system of public safety micro-grids; if one goes down there are numerous others that are powered up and ready to assume overflow calls. The previous system of local dispatch was not broken, and this new "fix" is not better and should be reversed.

In closing I want to again thank the committee for raising this bill, and urge amending it to include restoring local dispatch and overnight coverage at the Troop Barracks. Thank you.