

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
EXCERPTS CONCERNING “**BUFFER ZONES**” FROM COLLOQUY BETWEEN
REP. TERRY BACKER, CO-CHAIR OF ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
WITH OTHER REPRESENTATIVES IN DEBATE ON SUBSTITUTE FOR H.B. 5418,
AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINE SITING CRITERIA*
Monday, May 3, 2004

(Pages 261 - 263)

REP. KLARIDES: (114th)

Thank you Madam Speaker. Through you on line 329 we talk about buffer zone in protecting the public health and safety. I would like to know what the standards of public health and safety we're using?

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REP. BACKER: (121st)

Thank you Madam Speaker and through you. It is, as I said before, this amendment has moved in a way, in a cautionary way to protect various citizens. I think I made it clear from the onset and I think it's been repeated several times not only by me but by others. That the impact of electromagnetic fields is fiercely debated between experts from both sides.

Fiercely debate and yet there is no conclusion. And so in answer to the Representative's question I would say that we have not established those public health and safety standards with the exception of trying to mitigate electromagnetic fields near those very sensitive laundry list that we gave before about schools and playgrounds and licensed day care center. Since we're unable to define that we will move it to the Siting Council to use best management practices for electromagnetic fields which may include obviously burying in the firs [SIC]

So the answer to your question is we don't have, we have not set the standard for public health and safety here. We will leave that to those who are better qualified than we are here today. Thank you. Through you Madam Speaker.

...

REP. KLARIDES: (114th)

Thank you Madam Speaker. Through you in establishing the buffer zones on line 331 we look into certain considerations such as residential areas, private or public schools, licensed child day care facilities, licensed youth camps, public playgrounds, etcetera. In this particular situation is that the focus of the Siting Council's determination of public health and safety? Through you.

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* Substitute H.B. 5418, which was enacted as PA 04-246, was introduced by the Energy and technology Committee. There was no floor debate in the Senate, since the bill was placed on its consent calendar.

REP. BACKER: (121st)

Through you Madam Speaker. I would say yes. Obviously buffer zones here are set at a minimum is the existing right of way as defined in the bill. So I think that establishes that. In terms of the areas we are looking at in terms of very sensitive areas it includes the laundry list that's in the bill, residential and so forth. Of course residential is something very difficult to determine, is it a five-acre zone, is it a quarter acre lot residential zone?

What is the extent of the exposure of EMFs and what potential harm they can cause? It's going to be left to the Siting Council to define that. For the most part, almost all of Connecticut could be deemed residential. A farmer's field is residential, a lot of places in our cities where there are commercial zones there are residents. So we've left up to the Siting Council to try to define residential based upon on hopefully what they can determine about electromagnetic fields.

(Page 268-270)

REP. MUSHINSKY: (85th)

Thank you Madam Speaker. Through you in the discussion of buffers that might be necessary for undergrounding the lines was the discussion of distance mentioned, the spacing between the lines and the depth at which the lines ought to be buried to provide sufficient safety to the exposure to children. Through you Madam Speaker.

DEP. SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Backer.

REP. BACKER: (121st)

Thank you Mr. Speaker through you to Representative Mushinsky. I think precisely why this bill has created very solid direction for the laundry list of sensitive locations we have chosen and the way we've established our buffers here saying at least the existing width. Is precisely why Representative Mushinsky's question is difficult to answer.

One is, no one knows what a safe level is, that has not been determined. It has not been determined anywhere. I mean there are some certainly very strong guidelines, yet the body of evidence out there suggests that they are only guidelines that no one knows if they actually cause these illnesses or not. I think that in deliberation the committee decided that we would err on the side of caution. However, we cannot nor do we know how to engineer the various mitigation practices that might reduce EMF on sites.

In other words we don't know how deep to bury it, maybe the soil has something to do with that. We don't know how to change the face splitting [SIC] in a certain area to reduce EMF. That has been left to the Siting Council with specific directions to use the best

management practices for EMF. So the answer to Representative Mushinsky's question is no, we have not contemplated nor have we dictated it. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

