



Minutes of the January 6th, 2026 Legislative Committee Meeting

Present: Fred Allyn (Chairman), Cheryl Blanchard, Rob Brule, Thomas DeVivo, Lenny Bunnell, Michael Scheffers, Sandra Allyn–Gauthier, Kathleen Smith, Tom Sparkman, Michael Passero, Tina Falck, Jill Rusk, Glenn Pianka, Bill Middleton

Additional attendees: Senator Osten, Senator Somers, State Reps: Nick Gauthier, Susan Johnson, Dan Gaiewski, Nick Menapace SECOG: Amanda Kennedy, Taylor Lussier, Avery Holzworth, Paige Booth, Dominic Anziano

1) Call to Order:

- a) The meeting was called to order by Fred Allyn, Chairman at 9:05 AM.

2) Roll Call:

- a) Ms. Kennedy determined that a quorum was present.

3) Early Voting:

- a) The Committee advocated for reducing the early voting period from 14 days to seven days, including one weekend. Data suggests the first week of early voting is ineffective and expensive, with some municipalities recording zero votes on certain days. Proposed changes were to standardize hours to no more than eight per day to reduce voter confusion and staffing costs. Senator Osten and State Representative Nick Gauthier noted that the GAE Committee is unlikely to make changes until after three election cycles (municipal, gubernatorial, and presidential) to gather sufficient data.

4) Unfunded Mandates:

- a) Municipalities are currently burdened by more than 1,400 unfunded mandates and tax exemptions. SECOG Legislative Committee requested a "two-for-one" rule, where any new mandate must be accompanied by the removal of two existing ones. Elected officials expressed frustration with "feel-good" legislation passed in Hartford that creates financial distress locally. Senator Marx and Senator Osten highlighted

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that many mandates, particularly in education, are federal requirements where the federal government fails to meet its 60% funding obligation, often paying less than 10% in Connecticut.

5) DEEP Solid Waste Permitting:

The closure of the MIRA plant has forced the state to truck or rail 800,000 to 900,000 tons of waste annually to other states, which SECOG legislative committee deems an unsustainable "non-plan." SECOG legislative committee is calling for fast-track permitting from DEEP to allow second burners at the Lisbon and New Britain waste-to-energy plants. Legislators and mayors criticized DEEP for being slow in permitting. Municipalities were encouraged to form a Solid Waste Committee to meet monthly and request DEEP attendance to push momentum.

6) Veterans Property Tax:

a) Significant concern was raised regarding the fiscal impact of the recent veterans' tax exemption. While the state projected only 176 eligible veterans in the SECOG region, the actual number has exceeded 610, resulting in over \$2.4 million in lost tax revenue for 13 regional towns. Ledyard alone faces a nearly \$500,000 annual hole. SECOG asks that language should be tightened to require "individual unemployability" status from the VA, and an income cap, to limit the tax exemption to those whose disability status truly prevents employment.

7) Education:

a) Discussion centered on the state funding for special education and the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula. For special education, SECOG proposed lowering the reimbursement threshold from 4.5 times the average student cost to 2 times. There was also a call for funding to "follow the student" for mid-year arrivals to protect small district budgets. Waterford noted that local taxpayers currently cover 99.7% of their education budget.

8) State Sales Tax Allocation:

- a) SECOG proposed allocating 1/6th of the existing 6.35% sales tax into a Municipal Revenue Sharing Account (MRSA). 50% would go to municipalities for capital/budget offsets, and 50% would be invested in statewide workforce development. Legislators warned this is a "heavy lift" in the Finance Committee, noting that similar attempts for tourism taxes have failed for years.

9) Other Business:

- a) Summer Recreation Bill: Senator Osten strongly opposed a proposed bill (requiring counselors to be 21) that they claim would decimate or shut down 75% of municipal camps. Collective and individual letters of opposition were requested.
- b) Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Fund: Senator Osten discussed a bill to restore the fund's formula, which would return \$89 million to the fund, primarily benefiting Eastern Connecticut towns.

10) Adjournment:

- a) Meeting was adjourned at 10:29 AM.