MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

 Undo the 90 day Automatic Permit Approval Process

HB- 5454- AAC Ninety Day Permit Turnaround Times for DEEP

BACKGROUND
During the September 2017 special budget session, a provision was passed into law that would automatically approve any permit application for which Connecticut’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has not made a decision within 90 days. DEEP is currently responsible for reviewing and approving applications across 45 types of permits, including solid waste disposal, hunting and fishing licenses, aquifer protection, and pesticide registrations and applicator certifications. Monitoring and enforcing the state’s environmental protection laws are an important part of DEEP’s mission, which contribute to the overall health and quality of life of Connecticut residents and the ecosystems they interact with. Recent budget cuts have forced the agency to do more work with fewer resources, as DEEP has had to grapple with a 20 percent decline in staff resources since the department was established in 2011.

JUSTIFICATION
This blanket approval process may have been intended to speed up the permit process for economic development purposes, but it would undoubtedly bear unintended consequences. Allowing automatic approval of permits dealing with hazardous chemicals, open space development or other processes that may impact our air, soil and water resources could threaten Connecticut’s environment and public health in a variety of ways.

DEEP has indicated that they are ill equipped to meet the new requirements of the 90-day automatic approval process and as such, the agency has stated that it will likely deny any permit application that could reasonably be expected to take longer than 90 days to review. If there is any concern about the environmental impacts or suitability of a given project, the agency will be forced to reject the application outright, instead of risking an automatic approval after 90 days. Instead of ensuring faster permit approvals at DEEP, this provision will more likely force applicants to begin the permit process all over again. This puts the agency under undue strain and could threaten to further erode confidence in the department’s ability to approve projects in a timely manner. CCE strongly supports undoing the 90-day automatic permit approval process, to ensure safety and transparency in DEEP’s permit application process.

Citizens Campaign for the Environment Supports HB 5454 AAC 90 Day Permit Turnaround Times for DEEP

Citizens Campaign for the Environment is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment.

www.citizenscampaign.org

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