

Connecticut Horse Council Legislative Update March 2014

The Connecticut Legislative session is moving quickly this year and many bills have been brought up for public hearing with a short notice. Please check the CHC website for updates and we will also send out e-mails. The Connecticut Horse Council is tracking a number of bills which may potentially impact our members. CHC urges our members to testify at the hearings or submit written testimony to the committees.

Members should also email their own legislators to ask for their support and/or cosponsor the bills listed below. Some have already had public hearings

NOTE: Even though a bill has already been “Heard”– you can still ask your legislators to support or make changes to a bill as a hearing does not mean that the bill passed.

To see the full text of the bills, please visit the Connecticut General Assembly website at www.cga.ct.gov and type the bill number into the search box. You may also obtain contact information for your legislators on this site. CHC encourages our members to contact their elected officials to express opinions.

Please go to the CHC website for updated Alerts and additional information on addressing the legislation: www.cthorsecouncil.org

Please contact your local State legislators and Committee Members to ask that they support and/or cosponsor **HB 5044**, **SB336**, **HB 5057**, **HB5555**, **HB 5370**, & **HB 5369**.

NOTE: CHC Does NOT support:

Raised Bill 5415: AN ACT CONCERNING THE AIR LINE STATE PARK TRAIL.

as written for two reasons: The use of eminent domain [Section 1, (b)] to acquire adjacent lands, and [Section 1, (d) where it shall be held, developed and administered “primarily as a footpath” (This trail is currently designated Multi-use).

Please contact your Legislators and the members of the Environment Committee asking them to strike eminent domain and support multi use

When contacting legislators remember to be respectful and polite, and use the bill number and title. Remember to sign your name and full address and ask them to reply to your request. Should you have any questions or need assistance, please contact CHC at president@cthorsecouncil.org

THE FOLLOWING BILLS ARE PRIORITY ISSUES FOR CHC:
Please contact your legislators and ask they SUPPORT the bills below

HB-5044: An Act Concerning Domesticated Horses.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) In any civil action brought against the owner of any horse, pony, donkey or mule to recover damages for any personal injury allegedly caused by such horse, pony, donkey or mule there shall be a presumption that such horse, pony, donkey or mule is domesticated, is not inherently dangerous and does not possess a vicious propensity. Such presumption may be rebutted by evidence that such horse, pony, donkey or mule was not raised or kept by a person.

(b) In any civil action brought against the owner of any horse, pony, donkey or mule to recover damages for any personal injury allegedly caused by such horse, pony, donkey or mule, evidence that such horse, pony, donkey or mule previously caused an injury to a person shall not be sufficient to establish a duty for such owner to restrain such horse, pony, donkey or mule as to prevent such horse, pony, donkey or mule from causing injury.

Purpose: To implement the Governor's budget recommendations.

Public hearing: Friday, February 28th

NOTE: CHC supports this legislation: Please address your legislators

SB 336: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PENALTY FOR CAUSING HARM TO A VULNERABLE USER OF A PUBLIC WAY

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2014*) (a) As used in subsection (b) of this section, (1) "vulnerable user" means: (A) A pedestrian; (B) a highway worker; (C) a person riding or driving an animal; (D) a person riding a bicycle; (E) a person using a skateboard, roller skates or in-line skates; (F) a person operating or riding on an agricultural tractor; (G) a person using a wheelchair or motorized chair; and (H) a blind person and such person's service animal, and (2) "public way" includes any state or other public highway, road, street, avenue, alley, driveway, parkway or place, under the control of the state or any political subdivision of the state, dedicated, appropriated or opened to public travel or other use.

(b) Any person operating a motor vehicle on a public way who fails to exercise reasonable care and causes the serious physical injury or death of a vulnerable user of a public way, provided such vulnerable user has shown reasonable care in such user's use of the public way, shall be fined not more than one thousand dollars.

Purpose: To increase awareness of vulnerable users of our roads.

NOTE: CHC supports this legislation: This bill had a public hearing on March 5th and was voted out of committee with some language changes. **Please address your legislators & the members of the Transportation Committee.**

HB 5057: AN ACT CONCERNING THE ASSESSMENT OF HORSES AND PONIES AND FARM MACHINERY AND THE TRANSFER OF LAND CLASSIFIED AS FARM LAND, OPEN SPACE LAND, FOREST LAND AND MARINE HERITAGE LAND.

To authorize municipalities, by local option, to exempt all horses and ponies from property taxation; to increase the property tax exemption for farm machinery; to amend the date on which a qualified foresters report must be submitted; to require property owners to provide notice of an excepted transfer of land classified as farm land, open space land, forest land or maritime heritage land, and to make other changes concerning the assessment of such classified land.

NOTE: CHC supports this legislation: Please address your Legislators and the members of the Planning and Development Committee.

HB 5370: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE PERFORMANCE OF CONNECTICUT'S STATE PARKS.

To implement the recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee concerning the performance of Connecticut's state parks.

NOTE: CHC supports this legislation: Please address your Legislators and the members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

Section 3 provides for the possibility of returning up to 50% of park revenues and fees to support Parks rather than go to the General Fund as they currently do. These revenues would be used to increase historically low personnel levels and offset dramatically increasing operational costs (fuel, trash removal, equipment etc.).

H.B. No. 5555: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO ANIMALS.

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2014*) Any person who, voluntarily and gratuitously and other than in the ordinary course of such person's employment, renders emergency medical assistance or other emergency assistance to any animal in need, or reasonably perceived to be in need thereof, including, but not limited to, the provision of safe and secure refuge to such animal, shall not be liable to the owner of such animal for civil damages for any injuries that result from acts or omissions by such person in rendering such emergency medical assistance or other emergency assistance that may constitute ordinary negligence. The immunity provided in this section does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross, wilful or wanton negligence.

Statement of Purpose: To extend good samaritan protections to persons providing assistance to animals.**NOTE: CHC supports this legislation:** This bill had a public hearing on March 17th and was referred to the Joint Committee on Judiciary.
Please address your legislators & the members of the Judiciary Committee.

HB 5369: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING A STUDY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TUITION PLEDGE PROGRAM AND A FINANCIAL AID PLEDGE PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT.

To implement the recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee concerning a study of the establishment of a tuition guarantee program and a financial aid pledge program at The University of Connecticut.

NOTE: CHC supports this legislation: Please address your Legislators and the members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

This bill enhances the opportunities for individual Parks to retain income from rentals of buildings/structures for use in maintenance and other needs of those Parks.

Raised Bill 5415: AN ACT CONCERNING THE AIR LINE STATE PARK TRAIL.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2014*) (a) It is declared to be the policy of the state of Connecticut that the Air Line State Park Trail be preserved in its natural character for the purpose of preserving the heritage of such trail as a means of transport between the cities of Boston and New York during the late nineteenth century.

(b) **The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is hereby authorized by purchase, gift, eminent domain or otherwise to acquire such land, including, but not limited to, rights-of-way and easements for the purpose of protecting or enhancing scenic beauty, as may be deemed necessary to establish, protect and maintain the portion of the Air Line State Park Trail, provided the power of eminent domain shall not be utilized to acquire a strip of land bordering said trail no greater than two hundred feet in overall width.**

(c) Any department or agency of the state or of any political subdivision may transfer to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection lands or rights in land for such purposes on such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon, or may enter into an agreement with the commissioner providing for the establishment and protection of said trail.

(d) The Air Line State Park Trail shall be held, developed and administered primarily as a footpath and the natural scenic beauty thereof shall be preserved insofar as it is practicable; provided other uses of the trail and lands acquired hereunder may be permitted, by the owner of adjoining lands or other, in such manner and in such seasons as will not substantially interfere with the primary use of the trail. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the right of the public to pass over existing public roads which are or may become part of the trail, nor prevent the department from performing such work as is necessary for the purpose of forest fire protection, insect, pest and disease control.

(e) The commissioner may enter into cooperative agreements with private organizations to provide for the maintenance of the trail.

(f) No person who has granted a right-of-way for said trail across his or her land, or his or her successor in title, shall be liable to any user of the trail for injuries suffered on said right-of-way unless the injuries are caused by his willful or wanton misconduct as covered in the provisions of sections 52-557f to 52-557i, inclusive, of the general statutes.

(g) The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is hereby authorized to use any department funds which may become available to carry out the provisions of this section.

Statement of Purpose:

To preserve and recognize the importance of the Air Line State Park Trail as an important part of the transportation history of the state.

NOTE: CHC Does NOT support this legislation as written for two reasons: The use of eminent domain [Section 1, (b)] to acquire adjacent lands, and [Section 1, (d) where it shall be held, developed and administered "primarily as a footpath" (This trail is currently designated Multi-use).

Please contact your Legislators and the members of the Environment Committee asking them to strike eminent domain and support multi use

Farm Bill Passes the Senate

On February 4, 2014, the United States Senate passed The Agricultural Act of 2014, a multi-year Farm Bill in a 68-32 vote.

The bill was signed by the President on February 7. The bill reauthorizes several programs important to the horse industry, including livestock disaster programs, the Market Access Program, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and supports conservation and renewable energy.



According to the Land Trust Alliance, "the 2014 Farm Bill will generate more than one billion dollars for saving working farm and ranch lands. The bill will keep working farms and ranches in family hands and reinvest dollars, keeping local communities vital."

Click [here](#) to read more about the Farm Bill and its affect land conservation.