

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 36 (SJ 36)

RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION TO PROTECT CERTAIN PROPERTY HELD OR CONTROLLED BY THE STATE FOR CONSERVATION, RECREATIONAL, OPEN SPACE OR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES

Why should you support SJ 36?

1. This bill has strong bipartisan support and was approved unanimously by the GAE Committee;
2. Maine, Massachusetts, and New York have constitutional amendments to better protect state lands. Connecticut should take this important step as well; and
3. As the CEQ report *Preserved But Maybe Not – the Impermanence of State Conservation Lands* makes clear, State Parks, Forests, and other valuable state-owned public lands are too vulnerable to being lost without adequate public input if the existing conveyance act process continues.

What problems does SJ 36 address?

Selling or giving away public lands without adequate public input has led to:

1. Fragmentation and loss of state holdings which are ecologically valuable, important for healthful outdoor recreation, and necessary for viable farming;
2. Landowners are discouraged from donating property to the state (they fear that their donation will be given away);
3. Valuable state lands are being given away without public input despite our fiscal crisis. This makes no sense;
4. It breaks faith with our predecessors who worked hard to preserve these lands, and with future generations who deserve such special places in an increasingly urbanized state.

Is a Constitutional Amendment necessary?

Yes! Each section of the Conveyance Act begins with the words “Notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes ...” and would override any new laws that might be more protective of public lands. A Constitutional Amendment cannot be so easily ignored.

What would SJ 36 do?

If state-owned lands are to be conveyed by the Legislature, the following would be required:

- Public hearing;
- Standalone bill focused on that individual proposed conveyance; and
- 2/3 vote requirement in each chamber.

What would SJ 36 not do?

SJ 36 would not prohibit the transfer of state lands; but merely ensure a more deliberative and transparent process. It would not interrupt the ability for state agencies to 1) make boundary adjustments with adjacent landowners/municipalities; 2) allow for utility, road, and other easements in order to do necessary work on public lands; and 3) work with municipalities to convey surplus state lands through the existing administrative processes governed by statute.

** If you have any questions, please contact Eric Hammerling, Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association via ehammerling@ctwoodlands.org or 860/335-0812 (cell)