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Remarks of Michael A. Pace
Chairman, CRRA/First Selectman, Old Saybrook
Trash Hauling Industry Study Group
July 10, 2006

Good morning, Commissioner Boyle, Commissioner Rodriguez, Commissioner Galvin and Attorney Morano. My name is Michael Pace, and I am chairman of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this important issue with you today.

CRRA provides trash disposal for 118 cities and towns across Connecticut, and we provide recycling services to 90 municipalities. Towns are not required to be part of CRRA or any regional trash disposal project, and, it is important to point out, it is not our intention to force towns to join CRRA. There are no territorial imperatives here. It is our intention – in fact, we believe it is our purpose – to make sure that every town has affordable, environmentally responsible options for making its garbage go away. That is why we believe that whatever action you may recommend to the Governor, its goal should be to foster a competitive market for this vital public health service.

To provide some background, CRRA provides the final destination for garbage collected by haulers, whether those haulers be private companies or municipal fleets. We do not collect trash ourselves, nor do we license haulers, though they must sign contracts to deliver trash to us and, under those contracts, they must adhere to our delivery standards. That means, for instance, they can't bring us trash from a non-CRRA town. To make sure haulers follow those delivery standards, CRRA has an enforcement staff working on the tip floors and scale houses at our facilities. They also make sure that haulers observe state laws regarding disposal of recyclables.

As I mentioned, we hope the end product of your work on this task force will be a competitive market for trash pickup. But without sufficient affordable disposal capacity, that competitive market will be stifled, and Connecticut is faced with a disposal crunch. Already, each year the state produces several hundred thousand tons of trash more than its in-state disposal facilities can process, so that trash must be trucked out of state. Most of the state's garbage goes to one of six trash-to-energy plants, including CRRA facilities in Hartford, Wallingford, Bridgeport and Preston, as well as the Bristol Resources Recovery Facility and a privately-owned plant in Lisbon. Under their operating agreements, within a few years five of those six plants could revert to private ownership, with their owners simply choosing to accept delivery from whoever is willing to pay the top dollar, whether the trash is from Connecticut or Rhode Island or New York. Publicly owned disposal capacity will keep prices down and will ensure that more haulers can compete in the marketplace.

As the Department of Environmental Protection updates its state solid waste management plan, we urge the adoption of mechanisms for providing the necessary infrastructure for trash disposal and enhanced recycling. The residents of our state – all of us – must accept the reality that as long as we're throwing things away, we need affordable, safe disposal capacity, and if we need more capacity, the good of the state will have to come before our "NIMBY" impulses.

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We also hope that whatever licensing mechanisms you recommend will provide for the comprehensive data collection in the areas of trash generation and disposal. Under the current piecemeal reporting structure, we don't know the sum total of who is generating how much trash and where it all goes. Making complete, accurate reporting part of licensing requirements will go a long way toward helping the state effectively manage its trash and recycling.

Like you, we were troubled by the revelations of the federal investigation of the trash hauling industry. But all of us in the public side of the trash business believe these revelations give us an opportunity to make positive changes. I would call your attention to comments from the Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority, attached to written copies of my remarks, for additional ideas.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. Now I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.