



Connecticut General Assembly
Energy and Technology Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 061067

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H.B. 5108 An Act Concerning The Process For Objecting To Actions Taken By Utility Companies Pursuant To A Vegetation Management Plan

Co-Chairs Senator Needleman and Representative Steinberg, Vice Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Foster, and Ranking Members Senator Fazio and Representative Buckbee, and distinguished members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

The Greenwich Tree Conservancy (GTC) is a 501(c)3 with over 1000 supporters. Our mission includes the preservation and protection of our town's urban tree canopy. In recent years utilities have increased tree trimming beyond a well-reasoned level with their work extending far beyond the scope of protection of our electrical grid, almost as if they have been given a permit to cut at will if it can be categorized under "protecting the grid". This practice needs to be better understood so that it can provide the necessary protection without degrading the quality of life of Connecticut residents.

We ask that you please consider a more transparent system of resident notification that includes clarity, communication, and accountability:

Clarity

- a. Utility to provide a notice including a diagram with an outline image of a tree. The diagram noting the area of the tree where trimming is proposed. Notice to provide a number that corresponds to the utility's work order.
- b. Utility posts additional notice on the tree itself for resident to understand exactly where work is proposed.

Communication

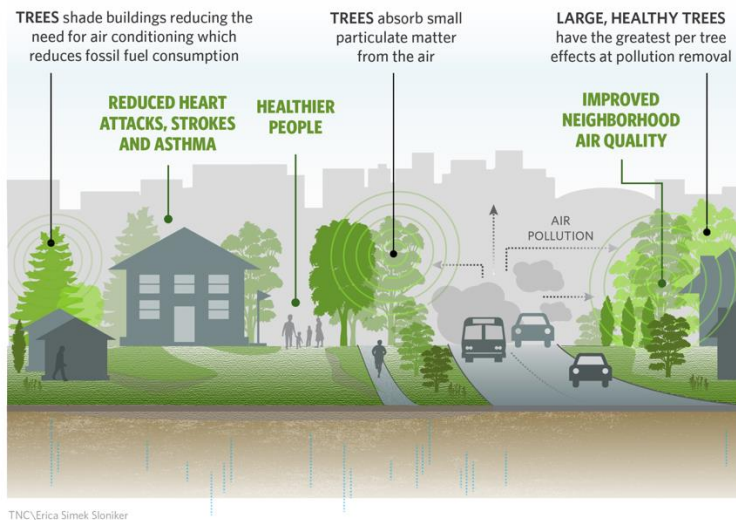
- a. Utility provides an a.email address AND phone number where resident can provide notification to allow or reject the proposed work. They can note the workorder number provided on the notice.
- b. If utility does not receive notification from resident, they may not perform the work. There are many reasons why a resident will not see a notice hanging on a front doorknob. Examples include traveling, illness, use back door, it falls off, a child or visitor removes it etc...

Accountability

- a. Utilities provide annual budget for tree work so charges to be passed on to customers are known. Special case situations such as 100-year storms can provide additional funding.
- b. Utilities provide report showing the scope of work performed throughout the past year. Report to include:
 1. Number of trees trimmed with percentage of tree limbs removed
 2. Number and locations of trees removed along with descriptions of why they were deemed a hazard.
- c. Utilities follow PURA decision in Docket 18-12-25 1/31/21 regarding subsection (e) of 16-234, Emergency exception clause which notes –

1. Authority use minimum level of pruning to resolve the “offense.”
- d. Tighten 16-234(e) through codification of PURA orders in Docket No 18-12-25
 2. Disallow use of emergency exception to perform non-emergency work
 3. Outline amount of pruning allowed to resolve the conflict of tree limbs touching wires.
 4. Require documentation of work be available to residents
 5. Prohibit removal of healthy trees.

It should be noted that you will never prevent all power outages due to storm damage without improving equipment and undergrounding wires where appropriate. When one thinks only of the possible future damage to be caused by every tree you are negating all the benefits mature trees provide to communities. It becomes a one-sided conversation to the detriment of all Connecticut residents. Connecticut has the highest air pollution in the Northeast. Our trees clean our air, absorb our carbon, cool our homes and businesses, and encourage us to spend time outdoors. They protect us from harmful UV rays and catch dust particles and solid pollutants, significantly reducing airborne particulates that cause asthma and other human health issues. This is particularly important in areas where increasing traffic brings with it increasing air pollution. Trees increase property values and decrease crime. While their true benefits are just beginning to be fully understood, recent study suggests an increasing awareness of the essential role they play in human health and well-being.



Indiscriminate tree removal does not support the Governor’s executive orders and works against creating a sustainable resilient system providing electricity along with a healthy ecosystem for those who live and work in Connecticut.

We ask that the committee seek a strategic balance acknowledging the multitude of benefits trees provide. With your oversight and thoughtful leadership, Connecticut can have both a strong electrical grid and a healthy tree canopy supporting economic prosperity and individual health.

Respectfully submitted,

Urling Searle, President
 JoAnn Messina, Executive Director
The Greenwich Tree Conservancy

