

Open Letter to Legislators
RE: Request to Address Light Pollution

I would like to introduce you to a pollution problem that has been growing in our State and not much has been done to reduce the waste of energy as well as deny our children the opportunity to experience what we have many years ago. Light pollution is no longer a suburban problem, but continues to invade our countryside and night-time sky. With light pollution, our visibility is severely restricted. More than two-thirds of Americans live in places where the Milky Way cannot be seen and only the brightest of celestial objects are visible. In addition to the degradation of our night-time sky it is estimated that dusk-to-dawn, statewide, year-around, misdirected and excessive outdoor lighting costs Connecticut taxpayers and electric ratepayers over \$80 million annually in wasted electricity production. Not to limit us to just fiscal matters, there are numerous studies showing the negative effects of light on wildlife and our health. It is apparent that darkness at night is as important as light during the day.

Light pollution is typically defined as sky glow, light trespass, and glare. Sky glow is easily seen on overcast nights where the clouds are lit by our State's lights shining or reflecting up. Light trespass is defined by light shining where it is not needed or wanted. The typical "street light shining into my window" is an excellent example. Finally, glare is probably the most troublesome and annoying. Glare can cause drivers to be temporarily blinded and unable to react to emergencies. This creates a hazard to our State's drivers that is easily avoided with good lighting practices.

Why should Connecticut address this problem? We are the "Show-Me" state, but what are we showing our visitors. We greet visitors at each end of I-95 and I-91 with over a million glaring lights. These poor lighting practices are carried to all corners of our state and are easily seen in a casual drive. Lighted billboards cover our highways and many are just blank white signs. We use unshielded roadway lighting fixtures that produce glare visible for several miles. Each of these annoyances causes our eyes to react while reducing our ability to safely travel. These excesses are costing us in both money and pollution caused by additional burning coal for wasted electricity. Area lights instead of the natural beauty of our night sky are increasingly greeting visitors to our parks. Why would they wish to sleep out under a streetlight?

How can Connecticut control this problem? Simply understanding what light pollution is and applying it toward exterior light projects will greatly improve our outlook. Simple regulations controlling lights on and around our highways, lighted billboards, and state parks will have a tremendous impact on addressing this problem. We need to look at ensuring our tax dollars are only spent on projects reflecting good exterior lighting standards. Education of the public to recognize poor lighting will help ensure that future decisions take good lighting practices into consideration.

I hope after reading this brief overview of the problem that you will endeavor to fully research and understand light pollution. Our State adds hundreds of exterior lights a day and postponing action will only cost us more to abate this issue. Correcting this problem is a win-win situation for travelers, neighbors and light owners. Neighbors bothered by poor lighting will once again be able to enjoy their property at night while light owners can realize an opportunity to utilize more efficient lighting that satisfies their lighting needs.

Sincerely