

Key Committee Clears Murphy Bill to Power Collinsville Dams; Town-Operated Refurbished Dams Could Power 1,500 Homes

In an effort to put Connecticut residents in control of their power needs, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) secured passage in the House Energy and Commerce Committee of a bill to allow the town Canton to operate its dams, in cooperation with Avon and Burlington.

May 27, 2010

Contact: Kristen Bossi

(202) 225-4476

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In an effort to put Connecticut residents in control of their power needs, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) secured passage in the House Energy and Commerce Committee of a bill to allow the town Canton to operate its dams, in cooperation with Avon and Burlington. The Collinsville dams, once retrofitted, are expected to produce about two Megawatts of power, enough to power more than 1,500 homes.

"Its projects like this one in Canton, where we are coming together to come up with creative clean energy solutions, that will put Connecticut on the path to energy independence," said Murphy.

Murphy and Canton First Selectman Dick Barlow have been pushing for town operation of these dams as municipalities, states, and the federal government looks for ways to provide cleaner, domestic power sources to consumers.

The two Collinsville dams (upper and lower) were built in the 18th and 19th centuries to power the Collins Company, which closed in the 1960s. While the dams are now owned by the Department of Environmental Protection, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued licenses in 2001 to a private company, Summit Hydropower, to refurbish the dams to generate hydroelectric power. However, Summit was unable to meet the license stipulation that construction begin by 2005, rendering the licenses value moot. In order to extend control to the town, federal legislation is needed.

Murphy's legislation would allow the FERC to reactivate and reissue the licenses to Canton, only after soliciting public comment and conducting the necessary environmental reviews. The state legislature has also passed legislation allowing Canton to operate the state-owned dams.

"It wasn't easy, but Dick and I have been gathering support for this project since I was elected. And today, we are one big step closer to putting these dams to work and lowering energy bills in the Canton area," said Murphy.

#