

House Republican Press Release

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Harkins: Eminent Domain Action Overdue



Stratford Legislator Says Private Property Needs Protection

HARTFORD- State Representative John Harkins (R-Stratford) today criticized Democratic leaders for failing to act on measures to curb government eminent domain powers, and stressed that it is a priority that needs action in the remaining two months of the 2007 legislative session.

“When the Kelo decision came down, Republicans and Democrats agreed that something needed to be done,” said Harkins of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that allowed the City of New London to seize private residences for use by a private developer in the name of economic development. “Since that time, members of the House Republican caucus have pressed for action, while legislative Democrats have stonewalled. We are wasting time while other properties are at risk and the General Assembly takes no action.”

More than two years ago House and Senate Republicans proposed limiting government’s ability to seize private property to enrich private developers. To date, nothing has been enacted, and more homes have been taken. Harkins noted that Democrats promised in 2005 that they would change the state laws to address the Kelo decision but sat by and watched as more homes and businesses were confiscated.

Last month, Democrats scheduled a rare public hearing on eminent domain on March 7, conveniently on a day when both chambers were in session which ensured relatively little public input.

“It makes me wonder if they have any intention of actually taking steps to protect peoples’ homes from government seizure,” said Harkins. “Thirty states have seen what happened here in Connecticut since that ruling on June 23, 2005, and have taken decisive action. Here in the state where the case originated, we have done absolutely nothing to protect a citizen’s home. When a local government takes a person’s home for economic development, they essentially are enriching a private developer for what is not even a guaranteed success. The proposed project may ultimately fail. The entire process of eminent domain has become outrageously over-applied, leaving many wondering if they have any rights at all anymore.”

This session of the General Assembly will conclude at midnight on June 6th, 2007.