

House Republican Press Release

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AG Blumenthal Files Lawsuit vs Company for clear 'cutting Trees on State Property Along I-84



Rep. Noujaim: Incident Resulted in Soil Erosion. Noise Pollution

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal today announced a lawsuit against a billboard company that illegally cleared 83 mature trees on state property along Interstate 84 in order to maximize visibility of its billboard.

The clear cutting incident has caused soil erosion and noise pollution problems, said state Representative Selim Noujaim, R-Waterbury, who represents area families who have been adversely affected by the loss of the trees.

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of the Department of Transportation (DOT), names Lamar Advertising of Hartford and related companies, and Long Hill Tree and Lawn Care Service, Inc. of East Hartford

Lamar, through Long Hill, cleared the 83 trees from state-owned property, decimating a vital buffer between nearby residences and I-84, and natural aesthetic beauty along a public highway -- damage that will take several years to repair, Blumenthal said.

Blumenthal's lawsuit seeks money damages for the restoration of property.

"Here's a billboard-sized warning: destroying precious environmental resources and defying state law means strong legal sanction," Blumenthal said. "This billboard company violated clear law when it clear cut 83 mature trees on state property. Lamar's unconscionable disregard decimated a vital buffer between nearby homes and a major interstate highway. Repairing this needless environmental and aesthetic harm will require years and resources."

"The trees that were clear cut were more than 85 years old and had been planted by the grandfather of several families who live in the area. They formed a barrier that dampened highway noise and helped protect topsoil from erosion. The trees were cut down mercilessly, and branches and stumps were left on the ground. The entire area looked as if it had been hit by a tornado," Representative Noujaim said. "The company responsible for this unauthorized and malicious act failed to adhere to the terms of the permit it received from the state Department of Transportation and cut down the trees without permission from the property owners. Justice must be done to compensate both the families and to repair the damage to the environment."

On Feb. 7, 2007, Lamar sought a DOT permit to “trim and remove undesirable growth” along I-84 in Waterbury, within the right of way of the state, approximately .3 mile west of Austin Road, Waterbury. The request was intended to increase visibility of the billboard.

Later that month, the DOT issued a permit stipulating that Lamar was only to trim -- and not remove -- any trees.

On March 15, 2007, Long Hill -- hired by Lamar -- cleared shrubs and trees well beyond the limits of its authorized location, destroying various species of trees, including oak, spruce, maple, birch, poplar and hickory of varying sizes ranging from three to 37 inches in diameter.