



Connecticut environmental amendment proposal advances

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The proposal for a Connecticut environmental rights amendment is moving closer to becoming a part of the state constitution.

This amendment is Senate Joint Resolution 37 (S.J. 37). The amendment focuses on establishing individual rights to clean air, water, soil, ecosystems and environment, according to state documents.

On March 20, the government administration and elections committee voted 13 yeas and six nays, moving the amendment closer to being passed. The bill needs to be passed through both Connecticut's Senate and House with three-fourths of a vote from each to be placed on the 2026 general election ballot in November, according to state documents.

If the amendment goes to the ballot, it will ask the following question: "Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to (1) provide each citizen an enforceable individual right to clean and healthy air, water, soil, ecosystems and environment, and a safe and stable climate for the benefit of public health, safety and the general welfare, that is equivalent to all other inalienable rights, (2) place certain obligations upon the state, including requiring the state to conserve, manage, protect and maintain the state's natural resources, and (3) prohibit the diversion of funds supporting protection of such resources?"

The amendment also requires the state to protect these rights equitably amongst all people.

"It also requires the state to conserve, protect, and maintain all the state's natural resources for its residents (present and future), including its waters, air, flora, fauna, soils, and climate," according to state documents.

State documents say the amendment "would also prohibit the removal of any funds supporting protection of the State's natural resources."

The need for S.J. 37 stems from the concern of environmental rights being less protected at the federal level and other states, according to state documents. The amendment would give more protection to current environmental legislation in Connecticut.

During a March 4 hearing, 13 people testified in support of the amendment and over 175 people and organizations submitted written testimony. There were also 25 testimonies submitted against the amendment and a few in person testimonies.

The Connecticut Environmental Rights Amendment (CTERA) Coalition has been working on getting this amendment in state legislation for over four years, according to a press release.

Kimberly Stoner is the coordinator of the Connecticut Environmental Rights Amendment Alliance and a retired scientist. She worked



A photograph of a water faucet. Senate Joint Resolution 37 focuses on establishing individual rights to clean air, water, soil, ecosystems and environment.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR

for the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station for 35 years. She is strongly in favor of the bill.

"It would give people a basis for advocacy first, and then would give them a basis for being able to litigate to change the state or local government policy," she said later in an interview with The Daily Campus.

She said that the new amendment would give a way for people to challenge things, such as permits, that are negatively impacting the environment.

Stoner said this was inspired by a national movement called the Green Amendments Movement that focuses on helping the environment through state and federal constitutions.

Maya van Rossum is the founder of the Green Amendments For The Generations organization and is also in favor of S.J. 37. She is also a member of CTERA and author of a book about green amendments.

"For years, Pennsylvania and Montana have had constitutional environmental rights of this kind in place and they are working to strengthen needed environmental protection and to ensure that the people of the state have a meaningful seat at the decision-making table. New York's amendment is the most recent, and we are not seeing the parade of horrors suggested by those who oppose the CTERA," Rossum

said in a press release.

Christian Herb, the president of Connecticut Energy Marketers Association, wrote to oppose the bill.

"Mr. Herb opposes SJ 37 on behalf of the Connecticut Energy Marketers Association which represents 600 local and family-owned energy marketers, who employ over 13,000 Connecticut residents. Mr. Herb states that the General Assembly previously passed the Global Warming Solutions Act, which requires biofuel blending. He argues that this allows many companies in the industry to make enough money to make investments necessary to transition to low-emissions fuel but that this resolution would expose this industry to litigation and disrupt this process," state documents said.

Stephen Sack, the owner of Sack Energy Corporation, also opposed S.J. 37.

"This bill will allow any person or group to sue the State of Connecticut and cost the tax payers billions of dollars. This will not help the environment and only cost the taxpayers. What I see happening is out of state law firms backed by venture capitol funds stating court cases looking for paydays on the backs of Residents," Sack wrote in his testimony.

The amendment proposal is currently waiting to be voted on by the general assembly at a later time. If passed, it will be on the voter ballot in November for the public.

NEW HALAL MEXICAN RESTAURANT GUAC N GRILL COMING TO DOWNTOWN STORRS

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A brand-new halal Mexican restaurant, Guac N Grill, will be opening their first restaurant in Storrs, replacing the space previously occupied by Chang's Garden, according to a March 10 announcement from The Connecticut Scoop on Facebook.

Placed on 1244 Storrs Road, the restaurant will serve a "Halal version of popular Mexican cuisine including fresh bowls, tacos & quesadillas crafted with Zabiha halal meats and antibiotic-free produce — served fast-casual style," according to The Connecticut Scoop.

Guac N Grill will be the newest arrival to Downtown Storrs, which has seen a bevy of additions and closures this year, from the recent closure of the Barnes and Noble bookstore for an Urban Lodge Brewery, the closure of Nautical Bowls after two years of service and the addition of Dog House Subs — which is from the same people behind the Huskies Restaurant and Bar — which opened last Wednesday.

According to The Connecticut Scoop, construction has already begun on the storefront, and by looking at their Instagram page, the grand opening may commence soon, after several posts have hinted at the possibility in recent

weeks.

Guac N Grill also has a website, guacngrill.com, which includes their background, menus and opportunities for franchising.

The restaurant's founders first immigrated to the U.S. over 20 years ago and built up two decades of experience working in Mexican restaurants until they saved enough money to open their first restaurant here in Storrs, according to the website.

All meats are Zabiha Halal certified, meaning that they use meat and poultry products slaughtered via specific guidelines, according to the halal certification authority Islamic Services of America.

Guac N Grill joins Haven Hot Chicken and Spice Venue as one of the few restaurants which offer halal options in Downtown Storrs.

Guac N Grill has six options on their menu currently according to their website. They have birria, chicken tinga tacos, burrito and power bowls, chicken quesadillas and fresh guacamole as a side.

Guac N Grill also hopes to include online ordering and catering options in the future, according to their website which has both options labelled as coming soon.

Their email can be found at info@guacngrill.com and their posted hours are 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. throughout the week.



A photo of the future storefront of Guac N Grill, a new halal Mexican restaurant. The restaurant is set to replace what used to be Chang's Garden

PHOTO COURTESY OF @GUACNGRILL ON INSTAGRAM

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