



Reps. Buddy Altobello, Don Matteo from the Meriden Boys & Girls Club, Majority Leader Chris Donovan, CC Johnson and Rep. Abercrombie.



Dear Friends:

The 2008 session of the General Assembly began with guarded optimism that we would end the fiscal year with a modest surplus; unfortunately, there was a downturn in the economy and a sharp decline in our revenue projections. We had to focus on how to minimize a looming state budget deficit.

An agreement was reached to hold to our initial 2008-09 budget in order to slow the anticipated economic strain that will most likely face us in the next year.

Although this was the short session, we passed legislation with important initiatives such as increasing penalties for repeat violent lawbreakers, provide assistance to hard-pressed homeowners caught in the mortgage/credit crunch, put in place unprecedented ethics reform, and enhance the health and safety of our children.

Again, it has been an honor and privilege to represent you in the General Assembly, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Warmest Regards,

Cathy

Catherine Abercrombie
State Representative

2008 Legislative Report



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Capitol News 2008



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CAPITOL UPDATE 2008



Teaching Autistic Children

INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER THERAPIES:

Though no cure exists for autism, early therapy is increasingly beneficial for a child's development. Currently there are few insurance companies covering such therapies. House Bill 5696 requires insurance companies to cover speech, physical and occupational therapies on or after January 1, 2009. This will result in decreasing the total lifetime costs of assisting those with autistic disorders.



Catherine and Dillon Trowbrige of Meriden visiting the Capitol on Autism Day.

EXPANSION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS:

In 2006 the legislature took action and established a pilot program to provide services to adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders who do not have mental retardation, for up to 50 people in the New Haven and Middlesex County regions for two years. The program provides coordinated services and support, including case management. This bill expands, from 50 to 75, the number of people who can participate in the pilot. It also requires the Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services to ensure that eligible adults living outside the pilot's current service area have access to the expanded slots and extends the pilot's end date for nine months to June 30, 2009.

THE TEACHING OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES:

To better address developmentally disabled students' needs, PA 08-5 improves education training to teachers and paraprofessionals through recommendations that incorporate effective teaching methods into teacher preparation and professional development.



Speaker James Amann and Catherine at a press conference advocating for the expansion of the Autism Pilot Program.

Volunteer Service By Paid Emergency Personnel Or Paid Firefighters

For several years, I and many of my colleagues in the General Assembly who represent towns with Volunteer Fire Departments have been fighting for legislation to protect the volunteers and the towns they so valiantly serve. This year, we won! The legislature passed a bill that prohibits municipalities with paid departments from banning their firefighters or paid emergency personnel from serving as active members of a volunteer department in the town where they live. The spirit of volunteerism continues to be alive and well.

Supporting Our Veterans

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY FAMILIES:

House Bill 5545 enables the State of Connecticut to join a national effort to provide uniform standards for how we treat military children that transfer into our state when their families are forced to relocate because their parents are deployed on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services. This bill also provides a tuition waiver at state colleges and universities for members of the Connecticut National Guard seeking graduate degrees.

GOLD STAR LICENSE PLATE: Last year, we authorized a Gold Star License Plate for immediate relatives of state residents killed in action. This year, I am happy to report that we eliminated the additional \$10 plate fee that was added to the normal registration fee.





The Berlin Corner



Breana Vessichio, a Berlin constituent, spending a day at the Capitol with Rep. Abercrombie.

My 2007 Survey Feedback



Many thanks to those who responded to the survey I sent out last fall. I appreciate the time you took in filling out the questionnaire, sharing your personal thoughts and even suggesting some of your own ideas. I did this to help me further understand the issues which matter most to people in the community. The results proved that most people expressed the same feelings, focusing their concerns mainly on issues such as healthcare, energy and taxes.

I realize the topics touched on and the matters and situations we face during these uncertain times can be daunting but, on a positive note, we did get to act on some of these important issues and I am happy to share them with you.

The price of gasoline has impacted all of us in a negative way. Many of us have had to re-evaluate our summer vacations, altering our daily trips and even reconsider what type of vehicle we drive. In the 17-hour special session on June 11, both chambers eliminated a scheduled July 1, 2008 increase in the petroleum products gross receipt tax. This alone will amount to a savings of 3 to 5 cents per gallon on gasoline for Connecticut motorists. Energy is another major concern to most everyone, causing great anxiety over the thoughts of heating our homes this coming winter. To say the least, I am very disappointed that the initiatives I voted on never made it to the House floor for a vote. Please know I will make these issues a priority in the 2009 session.

I am proud of the healthcare bill that was passed in May in the House of Representatives. It was disappointing that the Governor vetoed the bill; with the high cost of healthcare, this would have been an opportunity to help our communities and small businesses.



Catherine, Teresa C. Younger, Executive Director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, with Kate Mordarski, winner of the essay contest on equality in the workplace.



Catherine and the Maloney High School basketball state champs being recognized in the House Chamber.