



DEAR NEIGHBOR,

The 2013 legislative session provided a solemn reminder of how an entire community can unite in times of tragedy. Without a doubt, the horrific and painful experience of Sandy Hook brought us together to work towards a safer Connecticut.

I am proud to have joined my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, who responded with a measure of reason to make our families, communities and school children safer. We can all find reasons not to take a stand one way or the other, but while making tough decisions is never an easy task, I am glad we were able to pass gun safety legislation that includes better mental health treatment and support for individuals and families.

More needs to be done, but I believe we have taken a step forward for the future of our state. My Democratic colleagues and I also delivered on other top priorities: Passing a balanced budget that does not raise taxes and helps municipalities hold the line on property taxes while protecting investments in education, job growth and consumer protection.

I am hopeful that you find this newsletter helpful and useful. It covers important information of the work we did during session.

It is my pleasure to serve you. I am available to answer your questions, concerns or any issues facing our state that you would like to discuss.

Sincerely,

STATE REPRESENTATIVE, CATHERINE ABERCROMBIE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Catherine Abercrombie

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HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

The newest version of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), which was released in May 2013, eliminates the formal diagnoses of Asperger's disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorders (both considered part of the autism spectrum). This change worries many doctors, therapists, patients and their families because it could create barriers to needed services. This law protects people previously diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders by allowing them to continue to qualify for statutorily required services on their private health insurance plans after the release of the DSM-V.



The 8th Annual Autism Awareness Day at the Capitol

NON-DEGREE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS AND TECHNICAL TRAINING COURSES PROVIDED BY REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES AND HIGHER ED BUDGET REPORTING

In these difficult economic times, it is important to know how our public universities and colleges are utilizing state funds. This session we passed a law that holds our state universities and colleges accountable for their expenditures by reporting to the General Assembly their operating budget for the current fiscal year and actual expenditures. The Office of Higher Education is also required to develop a list of non-degree certificate programs for our regional community and technical colleges that directly correlate with workforce shortage areas in the state.



Berlin High School Student, Julia Kemmling, receives a citation on Golf Day



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

In response to several high-profile prosecutions of human traffickers in recent years and the rise of exploitative/sexual trafficking of adults and minors in and through Connecticut, we took steps to address human trafficking crimes. The new law gives prosecutors more tools to bring criminals to justice such as increasing the risk of arrest or jail time for sexual soliciting of minors under the age of 18, forfeiture of assets derived from exploitation of minors, a public awareness campaign and increased penalties for criminals involved in human trafficking. The law also protects victims by permitting anyone convicted of prostitution to apply to the Superior Court to vacate a conviction because he or she was a victim of trafficking.

HOMEOWNER PROTECTION RIGHTS

The ability to own a home is part of the American dream, but financial hardship can threaten that dream for families, sending them to the brink of foreclosure. We worked hard this past session to protect homeowners and facilitate a fair and speedy foreclosure mediation process by passing An Act Concerning Homeowner Protection Rights. A more streamlined process helps both the banks and the homeowners come to a quicker solution to keep homeowners in their homes, while fulfilling their obligation to the bank or lender. The provisions include: At least three mediation sessions before referring a case to a judge, a requirement that banks mediate in good faith, which helps remove blighted properties from neighborhoods by shortening the foreclosure timelines for abandoned property, and requirements that the bank treat a homeowner's most recently submitted financial package as current which will end the burden of constant requests for new documents. Finally, the law provides the Department of Banking with the authority to create regulations that require banks to disclose various foreclosure-related information.

Health Law Answers

Helping Seniors Navigate The New Affordable Care Act

www.HealthLawAnswers.Org



HONORARY DIPLOMAS FOR VIETNAM VETERANS

Many Connecticut veterans put their own lives on hold to serve our country during times of war. This year the state legislature continued a tradition of recognizing these individuals by allowing local and regional school boards to award high school diplomas to Vietnam Era veterans who left high school for military service before graduating. The act covers honorably or generally discharged veterans who served actively from February 28, 1961 to July 1, 1975 in the U. S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or Air Force or any of their reserve components, including the Connecticut National Guard performing duty under U. S. Code Title 32 (e. g. , certain homeland security missions).

SYNCHRONIZING PRESCRIPTION REFILLS

Prescription refill synchronization is a way of coordinating patient's prescription refills to occur on the same day every month. This law protects patient's drug coverage by requiring that insurance companies cover prescriptions filled in a synchronized manner as long as the patient, their doctor and their pharmacist approve this medication plan. By simplifying the prescription refill process this legislation helps small pharmacies that traditionally offer home delivery of prescriptions, allowing them to cut down overhead costs by only delivering to a specific home once a month.

HOMEMAKER COMPANION AGENCIES & CONSUMER PROTECTION

This law helps to protect some of our most vulnerable residents, requiring that homemaker companion agencies notify clients in writing that a comprehensive background check was performed on the employee. This must occur before sending an employee to a client's residence for the first time. The legislation also adds additional consumer protections to agency contracts, including specifying payment obligations and when contracts between the agency and client are enforceable and can be cancelled.

