

CAPITOL UPDATE



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Proposed Amendment To The State Constitution To Allow Seventeen-Year-Old Persons Who Will Be Eighteen Years Of Age At The Next Regular Election To Vote In Primaries Related To Such Election

In 1971 the United States ratified the 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution to standardize the voting age to 18 years old. Connecticut further expanded the youth vote this year by passing a resolution proposing a Connecticut constitutional amendment allowing 17-year-old citizens who will turn 18 on or before the day of a regular election to vote in its primary. This resolution will be placed on the November 2008 ballot for a vote. HJ 21

Teenage Drivers

In an effort to prevent further accidents and encourage responsible driving, the General Assembly passed Public Act 08-32. This comprehensive legislation makes numerous changes to the teen driver graduated license by extending the passenger restrictions for new drivers from 6 months to 1 year, establishing a curfew of 11 PM for teen drivers, and requiring seat belts to be worn by all passengers in a car operated by a teen driver. In addition, the legislation requires teen drivers to have 40 hours of behind-the-wheel training. Plus, to foster greater parental involvement and understanding of the graduated license limitations and penalties, a parent or guardian must attend a 2 hour class with their child. In addition, the bill significantly increases the penalties and suspensions for both violations of the graduated license restrictions and the more serious offenses of excessive speeding, DUI, street-racing and reckless driving. Finally, PA 08-32 enables police officers to confiscate a teen's driver's license for 48 hours for violating any of the graduated license restrictions as well as for excessive speeding, reckless driving and street racing. Effective: August 1, 2008.

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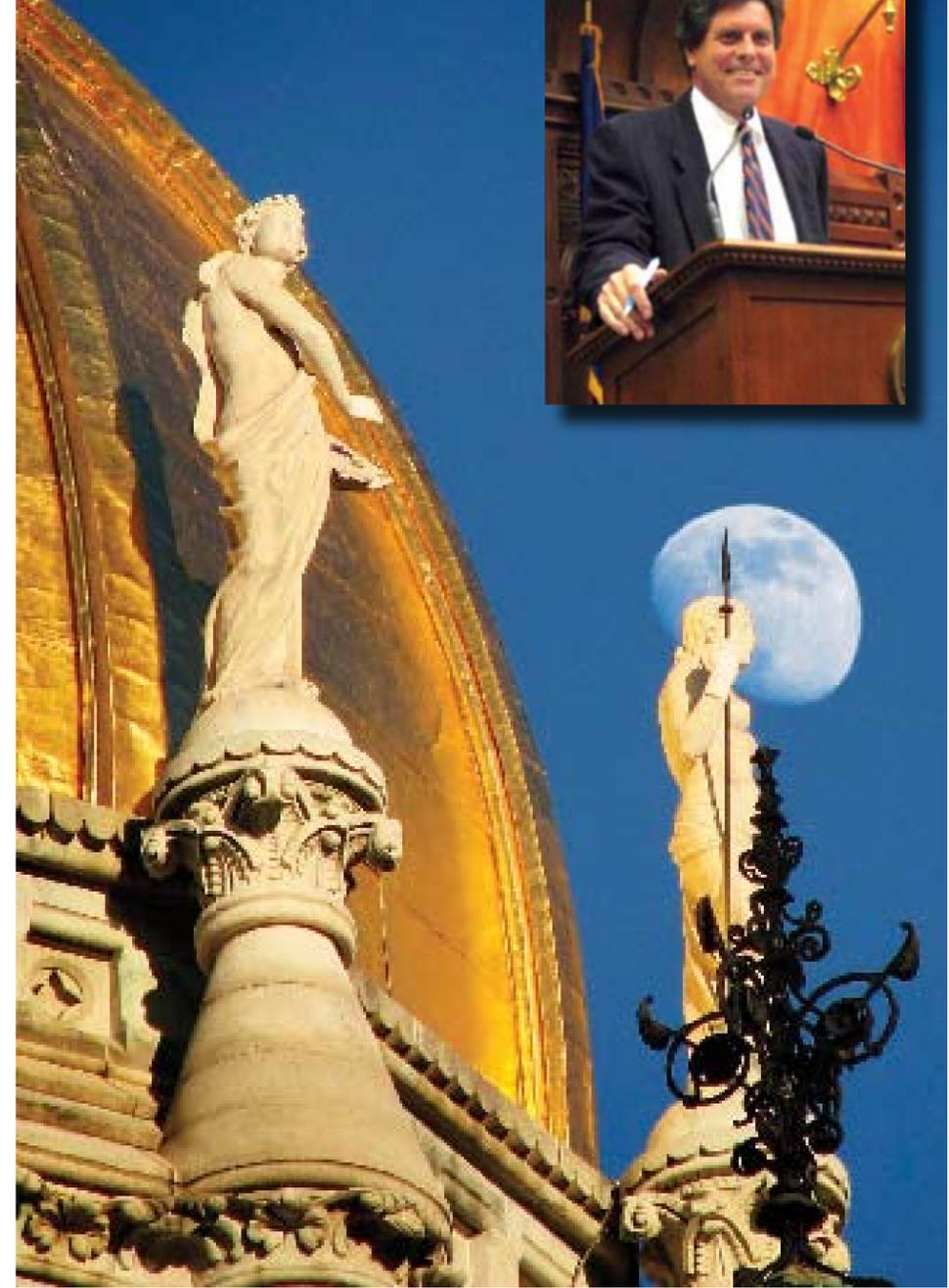


photo of the Capitol taken by Buddy

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Deputy Speaker Emil “Buddy” Altobello

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Persistent Dangerous Felony Offenders Legislation

Under this legislation, people arrested for manslaughter, arson, kidnapping, robbery, assault, home invasion, burglary, sexual assault, who have already once been convicted of and served time for committing one of these crimes, may be charged as persistent dangerous felony offenders. Under current law, the penalty for someone who meets the criteria to be a persistent dangerous felony offender with one of the required prior convictions is up to 40 years. Under the bill, the penalty instead is a range from (1) twice the minimum penalty for the crime the person stands convicted of, including twice any mandatory minimum sentence that applies, to (2) the greater of 40 years or twice the maximum penalty for the crime the person stands convicted of. The bill retains the life sentence as the maximum penalty and imposes a minimum term of three times the minimum penalty for the crime the person stands convicted of, including three times any mandatory minimum sentence that applies. PA 08-51

Responsible Lending and Economic Security

The mortgage crisis has hit many Connecticut families hard this year. We have offered assistance to these families through the creation of new (HERO and Mortgage Crisis Job Training) and the enhancement of existing (CT families and EMAP) state programs for mortgage and foreclosure help. Connecticut housing authorities say they're starting to reach more troubled subprime borrowers with their mortgage rescue plan, but they're still urging more families to come forward. So far nearly 700 families have received counseling and almost 600 sub-prime loans have been modified by the original lenders. Another 16,000 modifications are in progress. The agencies to contact regarding these programs are the Department of Banking's Foreclosure Assistance Hotline at 877-472-8313 or the Connecticut Housing Authority at 860-571-3500.



Expanded Bus Transportation

With gas prices and bus ridership increasing each month, there is great demand to fill the gaps in service and expand new transit services. To provide better bus service statewide, the legislature established the Buses for 21st Century Mobility program in statute, using the \$5 million program created in the biennial budget passed last year. The program will provide increases in the frequency of service, expand hours of service to nights and weekends, new commuter connections and improved web trip planning and marketing.

Manufacturing Assistance Act

This act makes changes to the statutes governing the Manufacturing Assistance Act (MAA) program which provides financing for developing property, acquiring machinery and equipment, training employees, and providing other business support services. MAA is administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The act changes the basis for determining if a business qualifies for MAA funds. The law bases eligibility on whether a business is in a specified business sector or contributes to the state's economy by selling most of its products and services to customers outside Connecticut (i.e., economic base business). The act designates more sectors, thus expanding the types of businesses that qualify for funds without having to meet the economic base criterion. In doing so, it makes it easier for specific types of projects to qualify for these funds. PA 08-34

Veterans

An Act Concerning Gold Star Family Number Plates

We eliminated the \$10.00 fee for the Gold Star Family license plates. Created last year, immediate relatives of state residents killed in active military duty will be eligible for the honorary plates.

Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Military children often experience six to nine different school systems between kindergarten and grade 12 and are frequently penalized educationally due to inconsistencies between states. Students frequently face difficulties regarding the transfer of school records, proper placement in courses, and on-time graduation. PA 08-57 commits Connecticut to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and establishes an interstate commission to administer the compact's uniform standards for schools and local school districts and removes the barriers to educational success caused by parental deployment.

Tuition Waiver for National Guard Members

Graduate level education is increasingly critical to professional success in today's global marketplace. In an effort to assist members of the state National Guard to afford graduate education, the General Assembly extended their undergraduate tuition waiver to include graduate programs at the University of Connecticut and the Connecticut State Universities. PA 08-57

Child Product Safety

In 2007, there were over 100 different children's products that were recalled because they were found to have high amounts of lead. Connecticut became one of the few states in the Union to pass bills that establish lead limits in children's products, prohibit the sale of these products and products that contain asbestos, and require the Department of Consumer Protection to post a list of children's products that are banned. The bills ensure that toys previously taken off the market are not put on the market again at places like dollar stores or flea markets. PA 08-106 PA 08-122



Insurance Coverage For Autism Spectrum Disorder Therapies

Though no cure exists for autism, early therapy is increasingly thought to be beneficial for an autistic child's development. Currently there are few insurance companies covering such therapies. PA 08-132 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.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR - SALES TAX HOLIDAY ON CLOTHING

This year's *sales tax-free week* will run from Sunday, *August 17th through Saturday, August 23rd*. It applies to clothing and footwear under \$300.