

STATE REPRESENTATIVE / ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPEAKER
EMIL “BUDDY” ALTOBELLO
PROUDLY SERVING THE 82ND DISTRICT, MERIDEN | MIDDLEFIELD | ROCKFALL



Wadsworth Falls

Dear Neighbor:

I am pleased to share with you this update on the recently concluded legislative session. Each year brings a new set of challenges, and the 2014 session was no different. The need to encourage economic growth, help working families, and make critical investments in the future of our children, as well as our state, was clear.

Meeting these priorities while also adopting a balanced budget with no new taxes took a lot of hard work, but I am happy to report to you that my colleagues and I were able to achieve our goals.

Working in a bipartisan manner, we were able to increase funding for education and enable more children to attend pre-school. We also made additional investments in job creation programs such as STEP-UP, which encourages employers to hire veterans and the unemployed, and will help our economy grow.

Spurring more economic development was also a priority that we met by helping United Technologies Corp. upgrade and expand its aerospace research and manufacturing facilities across the state. This, in turn, will have a domino effect by helping its suppliers and related businesses.

I hope you find the enclosed information helpful and will feel free to call or email me for any reason — legislative or otherwise. It is my pleasure and honor to serve as your state representative.

Best Wishes,

Buddy

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CAPITOL UPDATE 2014

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**EMIL “BUDDY”
ALTOBELLO**

Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Capitol: 860-240-8585
Toll Free: 1-800-842-8267
www.housedems.ct.gov/Altobello



Hubbard Park



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Capitol: 860-240-8585 | Emil.Altobello@cga.ct.gov



PROTECTING OUR CONSUMERS WITH HEATING FUEL CONTRACTS

Over the past few years, some heating fuel companies have gone out of business, taking their customer’s money and not delivering their fuel. In order to protect consumers, we created a moratorium on selling fuel contracts during the peak-heating season (between November 1 and March 31). Dealers that offer prepaid contracts will also be required to disclose details of the offer, including how the contract will be secured. The Department of Revenue Services commissioner will notify the Department of Consumer Protection annually of any outstanding tax delinquencies a heating fuel dealer owes to the state. (SB 299)

ELECTRIC CUSTOMER CONSUMER PROTECTION

This year we added much-needed transparency to an issue that we heard about from many state residents regarding predatory energy providers and confusing energy bills.

A state market analysis released in March by the Office of Consumer Counsel estimated Connecticut consumers were overpaying for electricity by an estimated \$13.7 million a month. Many consumers have counted on paying less for energy after signing up for low introductory rates from suppliers, only to discover that their rates jumped in the weeks that followed.

Energy suppliers will now be prohibited from offering consumers short-term "teaser" energy contracts with low rates, then switching to much higher variable rate contracts within weeks. Termination fees would be capped at \$50 under the law, and a consumer could switch back to the standard rate charged by UI or CL&P within 72 hours.

More transparent billing practices and faster switching, so a customer can fire a company quickly and easily, along with prohibitions of coercive and deceptive sales practices, will empower consumers. (SB 2)

TRIMMING UTILITIES’ TREE TRIMMING PRACTICES

In response to concerns expressed by residents, we gave homeowners more say over whether trees on their property can be cut down or trimmed by utility companies.

More care will be taken in deciding how much, and where, cutting needs to be done. The utilities will need to work more closely with town residents and tree wardens to make these decisions together. The burden will rest with utility companies to demonstrate the need to trim or remove trees they believe threaten the electricity supply.

Utilities will now be required to obtain written consent from property owners for the removal or cutting of trees on private property, and to provide notice to property owners abutting public rights of way.

We also established a mediation process for property owners to challenge a proposed tree cutting and to request stump removal. Final local authority regarding a specific tree rests with the municipal tree warden, with an additional appeal going before the state Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA). PURA is also required to conduct a biennial review of a utility’s tree trimming policy with input from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). (HB 5408)



Buddy discusses legislation with Mary Fritz

HELP FOR OUR VETERANS

This session we worked to streamline the state licensing process for our job-seeking veterans. Connecticut veterans can now apply their military training toward occupational licenses, including public safety positions and a variety of trades. In addition, college credits can be awarded for specialty training and apprenticeship credits applied to specific trades. (HB 5299)



Buddy helps refurbish the snack shack at the lake

STOLEN VALOR

This law implements a penalty for lying about receiving a military medal or other Congressional decoration with the intent to fraudulently obtain money, property or other tangible benefits. Those wearing military uniforms or medals they are not entitled to wear with the intent to commit fraud may receive a fine of between \$500 and \$1,000, up to six months imprisonment, or both. (PA 14-56)

