

# CAPITOL UPDATE 2012

## 2012 Budget

One of the hallmarks of the 2012 session was the passage of a \$20.5 billion fiscal year 2013 budget adjustment bill that did not raise additional taxes. Meanwhile we preserved municipal aid and created a jobs bill to spur economic recovery.

A year ago, we dealt with a shortfall in excess of \$3 billion – 15 percent of our total budget. This year, the House passed a budget adjustment that keeps appropriations under the state’s constitutionally-mandated spending cap and continues our investments in education and job growth.

## Education Reform

Thousands of children in under performing schools have renewed hope that their schooling will lead to productive lives. The education reform package has long-term implications for our children and for the state’s economic well-being. The better we prepare children for the 21st Century workforce, the stronger we’ll make Connecticut’s economy. The bill:

- Includes more funding for school-based health centers and family resource centers.
- Recognizes the critical importance of early childhood education by underwriting 1,000 school readiness slots for preschoolers and funding initiatives to improve early reading success.
- Includes the Commissioner’s Network, which provides the intensive supports and interventions needed to turn around 25 of the most chronically low-performing schools.
- Gives the state commissioner of education the needed authority to develop or modify plans with teachers and parents at “turnaround”

schools, while respecting collective bargaining rights.

- Reforms the teacher tenure system by increasing the frequency of teacher evaluations and linking tenure to evaluations.

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Rep. Baram with Rep. McCrory discussing legislation.



Rep. Baram discusses issues with Rep. Gary Holder-Winfield.

## Dear Neighbor:

From jobs to education to improved response to natural disasters, the legislature helped citizens across our state in many ways in 2012.

It started last October when we passed comprehensive, bipartisan jobs legislation that invested hundreds of millions of dollars in small businesses, gave firms hiring incentives, aligned education programs with jobs-in-demand, encouraged entrepreneurship and innovation, and eliminated red-tape.

This spring, we balanced a budget by keeping our funding promise to cities and towns without raising taxes. Historic changes were made to our educational system so our children can succeed. We made it easier for people to exercise voting rights, and demanded that utility companies respond better when storms and crises hit. We repealed a death penalty law that wasn’t working, and further protected individuals who are victims of domestic violence.

Along the way, we gave new hope to those suffering from debilitating illnesses by legalizing medical marijuana, pursuant to strict regulation and oversight, and helped children with special needs by improving Individualized Education Programs and creating a study on workforce development, training and employment of young adults with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

As Vice Chair of the General Law Committee I worked on several bills important to consumers, which include: providing relief at the pump, keeping kids off drugs, updating the real estate property disclosure form, and increasing medical treatment with technology.

I am proud to have stabilized your property taxes by supporting state dollars to Bloomfield and Windsor that resulted in the following: transfer of 36 acres of state land for the Bloomfield Wintonbury Golf Course, transfer of a former group home property to the Town of Windsor, \$256,000 in bonding funds for conservation to renovate the Bloomfield Town Hall windows, \$150,000 allocation to the Windsor Arts Center and \$571,000 to the Auer Farm in Bloomfield.

I hope this report is informative. I’m happy to answer any questions about these issues or any others facing our state this year. Together we can work to create a better future for our friends and families.

Sincerely,

## State Representative

# DAVID BARAM



State Representative  
**David Baram**

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# State Representative **DAVID BARAM**

Bloomfield & Windsor | [www.housedems.ct.gov/Baram](http://www.housedems.ct.gov/Baram)



Rep. Baram meeting about Alzheimer's and senior issues.

## Racial Profiling

Too many individuals in our communities continue to suffer from bias based on their appearance. We strengthened an existing law aimed at stopping police from profiling motorists based on race, ethnicity or religion during traffic stops.

## "Caylee's Law"

We set criminal penalties for the failure to report the disappearance of a child. The law is in response to the circumstances surrounding the death of Florida toddler Caylee Anthony, and applies to any parent, guardian or person who has custody or supervision of the child.

## Capital Punishment Repeal

Capital Punishment Repeal makes Connecticut the 17th state to eliminate capital punishment, replacing the death penalty with a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole. The new law is considered prospective, meaning that it does not apply to murderers already on death row.

## Reducing Domestic Violence

As a member of the Domestic Violence Task Force we have made great progress in helping those victimized by domestic violence in recent years, but the problem persists in our communities. This year we strengthened the state's laws to better protect victims, hold abusers accountable, and give new tools to law enforcement by:

- Improving access to and enforcement of protective and restraining orders.
- Giving police officers new tools including a requirement that municipal police departments develop and implement guidelines for arrest policies.
- Allowing victims to report violations of restraining and protective orders in the town where they reside, where they receive the communication or where the communication was initiated.
- Extending the maximum length of restraining orders to one year from the current six months.
- Ordering a feasibility study of developing a 911 texting system.
- Requiring courts to share protective orders with schools that victims attend, upon request of a victim.
- Strengthening the definition of stalking to ensure that stalking incidents—including digital stalking—are appropriately punished.

## Election Day Voter Registration

Election Day Voter Registration makes it easier for Connecticut residents to vote. The bill allows eligible Connecticut residents to register to vote and cast a ballot on Election Day. It would establish Election Day registration (EDR) procedures and eliminate the use of presidential ballots since they will be redundant under the bill's EDR provisions. Connecticut residents would be able to go online and use their driver's license number to log into a secure website and register to vote.

## Desecrating Veteran Memorials

We increased penalties for desecrating veteran's memorials. Honoring the present and past sacrifices of our veterans is of utmost importance.



Rep. Baram meeting about senior health care issues at the capitol.

## Seniors

Protecting the quality of life for our senior citizens is an important responsibility. This year we focused on healthcare and grandparents' rights.

**GRANDPARENTS' RIGHTS** - This new law enhances the rights of grandparents seeking visitation rights by putting extra weight on evidence showing a parent-like relationship exists and that a denial of visitation rights could cause harm to the child.

**HOSPICE CARE** - With just two licensed hospices in the state, this new law will give smaller hospice facilities the opportunity to provide high quality services that allow patients to stay closer to family and friends.

**PRESERVING MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY** - This legislation ensured thousands of seniors and people with disabilities could continue to use the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to help pay for their Medicare co-pays and deductibles by raising the income limit for MSP.

## Sewage Spill Alerts

Sewage spills can impact our health and property as well as our waterways and beaches. Spill alerts will now occur for breaches at sewage treatment plants. The new law will inform the public whenever a sewage spill occurs by requiring the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to post information on sewage spills on the agency's website beginning in July, 2014.

## Sunday Sales

We eliminated one of the last vestiges of the state's Blue Laws, allowing package and grocery stores to sell alcohol on Sundays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. It also allows them to sell on Memorial, Independence and Labor Days, and on Mondays following any Independence, Christmas or New Year's Days that fall on a Sunday.

## Hurricane Deductibles

We are protecting homeowners by prohibiting insurers from applying hurricane deductibles if a hurricane is downgraded to a tropical storm before it strikes. That was the case in August 2011 when Hurricane Irene was downgraded shortly before it entered the state but many still incurred a large financial penalty through the hurricane deductible. Under the new law, homeowners and businesses are also protected from price gouging by vendors overcharging for goods and services during unusual weather events.

## Tropical Storm Irene and the October Nor'easter

Connecticut residents will not have to endure the hardships of last October's Nor'easter and Tropical Storm Irene with sweeping reforms to better prepare for future events and avoid wide-spread and lengthy loss of utility service. Utilities will be held to minimum performance standards for emergency preparation and response with corresponding penalties of up to 2.5 percent of an electric or gas company's annual distribution revenue, which could amount to millions of dollars in fines.

Rep. Baram and Lt. Gov. Wyman touring shelters after the October snow storm.

