

THE BUDGET: TAX RELIEF FOR WORKING FAMILIES

We worked to adopt a budget setting us on a path that encourages continued economic growth. We protected hard-working, middle-class families by providing property tax relief through additional aid to our communities, and funded vital services.

The budget is balanced, under the spending cap, and invests in Connecticut's transportation infrastructure.

DELIVERING FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

Most car owners will see a cut in their motor vehicle tax beginning in 2016 as we capped the car tax rate statewide at 32 mills for July 2016 and 29.36 mills in July 2017. No one's car tax goes up under this plan.

Increased state aid for every city and town will allow municipalities to lower or maintain their mill rates. Private colleges that own off-campus property, and larger non-profit hospitals that buy property, will begin to contribute to a town's tax base to help pay for services they use.

Towns with a larger number of tax-exempt properties (e.g. state property, churches, colleges and hospitals) receive additional aid for further property tax relief as well.

Veterans' retirement pay will now be 100 percent exempt from the state income tax.

Only individuals and couples earning more than \$500,000 and \$1 million, respectively, will see a slight increase in their income tax rate. This impacts about 20,000 households out of Connecticut's 1.5 million. Connecticut income tax rates remain lower than New York and New Jersey.

Tax loopholes that allow corporations with profits out of state or overseas to avoid paying their fair share of taxes are being closed.

MAKING TOUGH CHOICES

This year, the legislature worked diligently to adopt a budget that represents the wide-ranging priorities of our diverse state. Over a billion dollars of cuts have been made to the current services biennium budget. General Fund spending growth is under 4 percent. Millions will be saved through reductions in state employee workers' compensation costs and overtime.

In addition, we were able to restore essential funding for families that need it most in addition to protecting social services, libraries, before-and after-school programs, mental health services, developmental services, and state parks.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DAVID BARAM

PROUDLY SERVING THE 15TH HOUSE DISTRICT | BLOOMFIELD & WINDSOR



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CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

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 2015 session was no different. Despite a serious budget deficit and the need to encourage economic growth, my colleagues and I passed a balanced budget that provides property and car tax relief for middle-class families and small businesses.

We also created the framework for a once-in-a-generation investment in our transportation infrastructure, which will spur more growth in our economy and create thousands of jobs.

In addition to delivering property and car tax relief, we passed legislation that protects seniors and consumers, and we brought transparency to the rapidly changing health care landscape. And in the aftermath of the largest data breach in state history, we set new cybersecurity standards for companies handling residents' personal data.

As co-chair of the General Law Committee, I introduced many consumer protection bills that will benefit our residents. I was also credited with helping to pass legislation establishing a Commission on Economic Competitiveness to analyze the implications of tax policy on state businesses.

We stood up for veterans, students and Connecticut workers whose jobs and livelihoods are under threat from out-of-state competition.

I hope you find the enclosed information helpful. It is my pleasure to serve the people of Bloomfield and Windsor as your state representative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Baram".

David Baram

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591
CAPITOL: 860-240-8500
WWW.HOUSEDEMS.CT.GOV/BARAM



SENIORS

PATIENT-DESIGNATED CAREGIVERS

The CARE (Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable) Act requires that a hospital document a caregiver in the patient’s discharge plan, designated by the patient. They must attempt to notify the caregiver and to instruct the caregiver on post-discharge tasks.

HOSPITAL TRAINING AND PROCEDURES FOR PATIENTS WITH SUSPECTED DEMENTIA

Those hospital staff members who provide direct care to patients will be trained on how to identify the symptoms of dementia. This will help these staff members to better treat patients with dementia.

PROTECTING THE ELDERLY

In situations where abuse or neglect is suspected, the Department of Social Services can now petition a probate court to gain access to that person’s home to make an assessment. The definition of neglect has been expanded to include elderly people who do not live alone, but whose caretaker fails to arrange for the necessary services to keep an elderly person healthy.

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR RESIDENTS OF CONTINUING-CARE RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

This year we created a bill of rights for senior citizens living in continuing care retirement communities. This bill of rights gives residents a voice in decisions that affect them within these communities. It requires transparency regarding the financial stability of the facility, and notification to residents of major construction or any changes in ownership.

PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATING ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS

This year we regulated electronic cigarettes and associated devices to conform with existing restrictions on smoking, banning them in state buildings, schools, child care facilities, dormitories, restaurants, places serving alcohol, and healthcare facilities.

PREVENTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

We passed legislation requiring prescribers (physicians, physician assistants, APRNs and dentists) to get trained in how to properly prescribe controlled substances. If prescribing more than a 72-hour supply of any controlled substance, the practitioner must check the patient’s record in the prescription drug-monitoring program, and report those prescriptions to the program immediately.

CHILDREN

REGULATING THE USE OF SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT IN OUR SCHOOLS

School employees may only place a student in seclusion to prevent immediate or imminent injury to the student or others, and are prohibited from using physical restraint or seclusion for the sole purposes of punishing the student.

REDUCING REQUIRED TESTING IN SCHOOLS

Standardized testing has come under a lot of scrutiny. One concern is that there are simply too many tests. Juniors in high school are currently required to take the SBAC exam at a time when many of them are taking the SAT or ACT college admission tests. New legislation allows schools to waive SBAC testing for any student taking these college admissions tests.

REPORTING OF DATA ON SCHOOL-BASED ARRESTS

One in every ten kids that appears in juvenile court is there because of a school-based arrest. To help students before they get to court, we asked boards of education to work on agreements with their resource officers (in-school police officers) to specify their responsibilities. These agreements would ideally include a graduated response model providing alternative interventions before resorting to the criminal justice system.



Rep. Baram with Senators Coleman and Bye at the ground breaking ceremony for the new 4H Center at Auer Farm in Bloomfield.

HELP FOR OUR VETERANS

The Legislature recognizes the important sacrifices that veterans have made. We have established the Women Veterans Program to help connect female veterans to services, and the Veterans to Agriculture Program to give tax credits to vets working in agricultural production. We created the Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council to help incarcerated vets reintegrate back into their community.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

Connecticut became the first state to create a Student Loan Bill of Rights, which establishes an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman. This office will regulate student loan servicers, compile data on complaints, develop a financial literacy course for students, and will help students navigate the loan process.

The Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) took historic steps toward increasing college affordability. It will offer its lowest fixed interest rate yet at 4.95%, down from its current rate of 6.75%.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

STANDING UP FOR CONSUMERS

Patients will better understand their prescriptions now that pharmacists are required to include certain information with generic drugs such as the brand name, the manufacturer’s name, and the website and telephone number for the FDA’s drug safety and reporting program (MedWatch).

VARIABLE ELECTRIC RATES

Connecticut became the first state to protect residents from electricity providers who offer a low introductory rate that increases rapidly. The protections require competitive electric suppliers to give their customers a 60-day notice before the end of their contract. Suppliers cannot charge customers a termination or early cancellation fee and must allow customers to switch providers within 72 hours.

BANNING POWDERED ALCOHOL (“PALCOHOL”)

Powdered alcohol has become all too appealing and convenient to underage drinkers. “Palcohol” is easily smuggled into schools and concerts, and some kids even snort it. Connecticut has now banned the sale and possession of powdered alcohol.

PRESCRIPTIONS NOW AVAILABLE IN 90-DAY QUANTITIES

Sometimes illness or difficulty with transportation can make it hard to get to the pharmacy to refill a monthly prescription. It also can be difficult if you are heading south for the winter and need your medications. This session we introduced legislation that enables you to get a 90 day supply. This will allow you to have a three-month supply of a prescription and not have to worry about getting to the pharmacy each month. (Co-pays and other insurance restrictions will still apply.)

PROHIBITING MANDATORY REGISTRATION FOR CERTAIN CONSUMER WARRANTY COVERAGE

A manufacturer or retailer is now prevented from requiring you to register to warranty the product, provided there is proof of purchase. They are allowed to offer extended warranties in exchange for returning the registration card.



Rep. Baram speaking at an AARP event at the Capitol.