

STATE REPRESENTATIVE | DEPUTY SPEAKER
JEFFREY BERGER

MORE JOBS, BETTER JOBS

Creating more and better jobs for our citizens continues to be one of our top priorities. Three such initiatives include:

- Creation of the Veteran’s Opportunity Fund, a pilot program that will help our veterans re-enter the workforce.
- Providing assistance to the long-term unemployed in the form of job training, financial coaching and opportunity to go back to school.
- More funding to give our economically disadvantaged youth access to jobs and work experiences.

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASED

Raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 by 2017 will help thousands of struggling working families in our state, add hundreds of millions of dollars to our economy, and is the right thing to do. Connecticut led a national discussion just two years ago about getting to a \$10 minimum wage, and we are proud to lead the way again, setting the stage for Congress to hopefully follow suit. PA 14-1

ENSURING AN EQUITABLE & STABLE TAX STRUCTURE

Connecticut’s tax structure is complicated, volatile, and oftentimes, regressive. This year, I co-sponsored a bill that creates a panel of experts to conduct a thorough review of all of the taxes imposed by the state and its municipalities, including the income tax, sales tax, and property tax. The tax structure as a whole will be examined to determine if it encourages economic growth, is fair and equitable, and is stable. When complete, the legislature will use this study to consider new tax policies. PA 14-217

MORE MONEY FOR CITIES & TOWNS

The state was able to make valuable investments and provide additional funding to our municipalities without raising taxes, while remaining under the spending cap. Cities and towns will see nearly an additional \$70 million in funding for education costs, Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), and other costs. By saving our municipalities money, we enable them to provide tax relief and make local capital investments. If I hadn’t worked to secure this state funding for Waterbury, the current mill rate of 58.22 could have been as high as 93.11 mills!

WATERBURY FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016 AID

Education Cost Sharing	\$132,732,623
PILOT: State Owned Property	\$4,494,191
PILOT: Colleges & Hospitals	\$5,868,909
Priority School Districts	\$3,430,081
Pequot/Mohegan Revenue Sharing	\$3,058,576
School Transportation	\$1,397,623
Local Capital Improvement Program	\$1,228,228
Town Aid Roads	\$1,083,548
Adult Education	\$2,308,474
Payment in lieu of MRSA Payments	\$3,041,051
Total State Funds to Waterbury	\$158,643,304

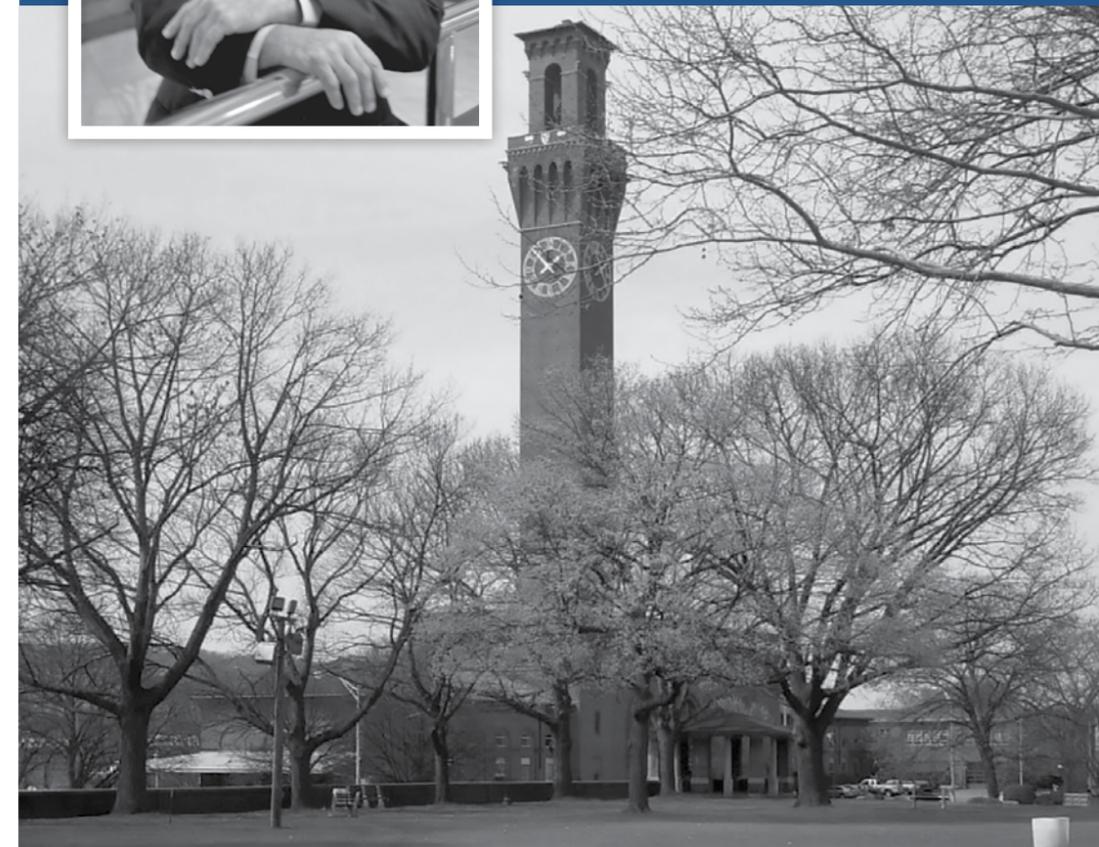
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BUSINESS & JOBS

UTC Commits to Making Connecticut its Home for Years to Come

Connecticut has a long and proud tradition in the aerospace manufacturing industry. This year we cemented this tradition by working with United Technologies Corp. (UTC) to make Connecticut their home for years to come. UTC has committed to upgrade and expand its current facilities and to invest in research and development. This agreement will bring high paying jobs to Connecticut and lower the property tax burden in our communities. It will not only maintain UTC jobs, but will positively impact all of the small businesses that serve as direct suppliers to UTC. In addition, science and engineering graduates will be able to find exciting work right here in Connecticut. PA 14-2

Cleaning up Contaminated Properties

Many Connecticut towns have disused or vacant properties that are contaminated or polluted by previous use. These sites need remediation to protect our residents from pollution and allow them to be used again. We acted to implement recommendations from the State of Connecticut Brownfield Working Group, of which I am a member, which will make it easier to clean up and develop contaminated properties, especially those acquired by towns and properties where hazardous building materials were removed or abated. PA 14-88

Supporting Business to Grow and Train Workers

Small manufacturers in Connecticut are an important source of jobs and the engine of economic growth. We work hard to provide support to these businesses through programs like the Manufacturing Reinvestment Account Program (MRA). The MRA is designed to help small manufacturers fund capital investments and train their workers. This year, we made it easier for businesses to take advantage of the program by increasing the number of employees an employer may have to be eligible for the program from 50 to 150. PA 14-69

VETERANS & MILITARY

Help for Jobless Veterans

This session we worked to streamline the state licensing process for our job-seeking veterans. Through a bill I co-sponsored, 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. PA 14-131

Stolen Valor

It's a crime to lie about receiving a military medal or other Congressional decoration with the intent to fraudulently obtain money, property or other tangible benefits. It is also a crime to wear a military uniform with the intent to commit fraud. Violators can receive a fine between \$500 and \$1,000, up to six months imprisonment, or both. PA 14-56

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CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION

Protecting Our Children and Making Our Schools Safer

This year we authorized \$22 million for another round of school security grants. This program helped many schools around the state add additional security infrastructure last year, with more than \$21 million in grants distributed. The state's technical schools, charter schools, private, and endowed schools will be allowed to access the funds. \$2.2 million has been set aside for private schools that will be reimbursed at 50% of eligible costs.

Strengthening the System Regulating Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for Children

This year the legislature heard from many families about problems with guardians ad litem (GALs), who are appointed by the family court to represent children in some custody and divorce cases. In response, a new law permits parents to select their own GAL and requires the court to disclose the GAL's responsibilities and fees, review his or her work, and set up a removal process. It also requires the Judicial Branch to develop a GAL code of conduct and a sliding fee schedule based on income. PA 14-3

Improving Access to Universal Pre-K

The Office of Early Childhood was established, and over a thousand additional Pre-K slots are being funded. Pre-K helps prepare children for grade school, academically and socially, and is a great long-term investment for taxpayers. Pre-K not only increases the chances of future success in and out of the classroom, but helps meet the ongoing challenge of providing equal educational opportunity to every child. PA 14-39



Rep. Berger reading to 1st grade students at the New Carrington School.

An Alternative to Foreclosure

Most homeowners at risk of losing their homes would like to avoid foreclosure. This year a law I supported established an alternative to foreclosure that can work for both the lender and the homeowner. The homeowner and lender can decide together that avoiding foreclosure is a more efficient (and now realistic) approach to disposing of a home that must be sold for financial reasons. They may then contact a real estate agent to sell the house at market price rather than risking a short sale. This option of sale benefits all parties involved and, most importantly, gives homeowners an alternative to foreclosure. PA 14-84



Rep. Berger and Rep. Joe Serra discussing legislation.



Rep. Berger talking to colleagues on the floor of the House.



Rep. Berger conferring with Rep. Butler.

HELPING SENIORS...

...Pay Their Rent

This year we re-opened the Renters Rebate program to eligible seniors and individuals with permanent disabilities to receive partial reimbursements related to rental payments. \$6.5 million in rental relief will be available to seniors, allowing an additional 12,700 seniors to receive a renter's rebate. PA 14-217

...Remain in Their Homes

Most seniors would prefer to live in their own homes for as long as possible. We have taken steps to help make this happen. This year we created a \$6 million grant program for home modifications and other assistive technology that will allow people to remain in their homes longer. The program is open to seniors and individuals with disabilities who are at risk of being unable to live independently without the modifications. PA 14-73

CAPITOL UPDATE 2014