

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# BETTY BOUKUS

PROUDLY SERVING THE 22ND HOUSE DISTRICT | PLAINVILLE AND NEW BRITAIN

## CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for your support. It has been an honor to represent you in the General Assembly for another term. There have been many intensely debated issues this legislative session and it has been a privilege to represent the people of Plainville and New Britain in each of those discussions.

Connecticut's economy continues to recover and looking back at the 2015 legislative session I am proud of the steps the legislature took to grow our state's economy.

We have continued to make important investments in Connecticut's Small Business Express Program, which has succeeded in helping to grow our small business community. The property tax burden has also remained a primary concern for many small businesses, and thankfully we worked to increase municipal aid in order to ease property taxes.

We have also made historic investments in our transportation system and increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding for many cities and towns. These investments are critical to growing our economy as businesses will not come to Connecticut if their employees cannot get to work in a safe and timely manner and if we do not have an educated workforce ready to fill 21st century jobs.

I hope you find this information to be of use and please do not hesitate to call my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth "Betty" Boukus  
Deputy Majority Caucus Chair



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# ELIZABETH "BETTY" BOUKUS

PROUDLY SERVING THE 22ND HOUSE DISTRICT | PLAINVILLE AND NEW BRITAIN



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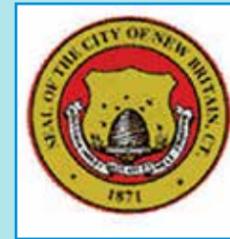


## CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

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Rep. Boukus with Torrington Reps. Roberta Willis and Michelle Cook. Rep Boukus received the Cornell Scott Leadership Award from the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut.

## PROTECTING ELECTRIC CONSUMERS



Rep. Boukus introduces legislation on the House Floor.

This year, the legislature took steps to protect electric ratepayers. Now, when an electric provider is changing costs, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) must hold at least two public hearings, which will allow consumers to speak directly with the regulating authority. Connecticut residents are also now protected from electricity providers who offer very low introductory rates that rapidly increase by these new requirements:

- Competitive electric suppliers must give customers a 60-day notice of the end of their contracts.
- Competitive electric suppliers cannot charge a termination or early cancellation fee and must allow customers who want to switch to standard service the ability to do so within 72 hours.
- A process will be established for PURA to further investigate and take measures to completely eliminate variable electric rates when a customer's contract expires.

## EDUCATION

### ADDRESSING THE EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT GAP

This year, we worked to help Connecticut close the achievement gap and improve educational outcomes for all students. We will increase early childhood literacy programs by requiring the State Department of Education to hire a Director of Reading Initiatives who is charged with implementing a statewide reading plan and coordinating Connecticut's various reading initiatives. In addition, more teachers will be certified in shortage areas, more minority teachers will be recruited, and educators will be given new strategies to build better relationships with students of different cultures. We also created a pilot program in four towns and cities to identify best practices for English Language Learners (ELL) instruction and will develop standards for students receiving longer periods of specialized instruction.



Rep. Boukus, Governor Malloy and Bristol Preschool Representatives at the Bond Commission approval of \$3.2 million.

### STUDENT LOAN RATES DROP

In an historic step increasing college affordability, the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) announced that it will offer a fixed interest rate of 4.95% for new student loans, down from its current rate of 6.75%. Not only is this the lowest rate that CHESLA has ever offered, it is also significantly lower than the new Federal PLUS loan rate of 6.84%.

### SCHOOL UPGRADES

On July 28th the State Bond Commission released \$200,000 for capitol upgrades to the DiLoreto, Pulaski, and Slade schools in New Britain which will be used to promote the health, safety, and learning of the students. For the old Linden Street School demolition in Plainville Rep. Boukus was able to secure an additional \$600,000 in state funding on top of the \$1.6 million in state funds already approved.

### PADEREWSKI PARK

This year Rep. Boukus was able to secure a \$151,000 state grant to help with renovations to Paderewski Park, including a new roof and paint for the pavilion. It accompanied a grant of \$50,000 for the splash pad last year.

## CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

### AUTHORIZING PHARMACISTS TO DISPENSE DRUGS IN 90-DAY QUANTITIES

To better help patients with chronic illnesses and others, pharmacists are now allowed to refill a prescription for up to a 90-day supply. The 90-day supply must not exceed the total quantity prescribed by the doctor, and must not be a controlled drug. The pharmacist also must inform the doctor of the refill within 48 hours after the refill is made. This does not apply to patients whose insurance won't cover the cost without additional copayment.

### BETTER LABELING ON PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES

To better protect and inform consumers we are now requiring that pharmacists include with generic drugs the manufacturer's name, the website and telephone number for the US Food and Drug Administration's drug safety and reporting program (MedWatch). If the patient is being given a generic drug, the pharmacist must include the brand name on the label. This will help to ensure that patients are aware of what drugs they are taking, where these drugs come from and where to report adverse effects of the drugs.

## VETERANS PROGRAMS

### ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT WOMEN VETERANS' PROGRAM

This year the legislature passed legislation that recognizes the important sacrifices that female veterans have made while defending our country. The Department of Veterans Affairs will be required to conduct outreach regarding benefits and services available for female veterans while taking into account the needs and obstacles women face. The program will submit an annual report to the legislature recommending new initiatives and detailing which benefits and services that would be best for female veterans. It is vital that we protect those who protect us and this legislation is a good way to honor these important women.

### MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY

Military veterans' retirement pay will now be 100% exempt from the state income tax.