Dear Friends,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you. I am proud to report that Connecticut families gained significant protections with the passage of many important bills this legislative session.

New laws taking effect this year include provisions for increased health insurance availability, affordable elderly homecare and a Silver Alert system for locating missing seniors, a ban on toxic chemicals in baby bottles, promotion of safe green cleaning products, and support for military families, among many others.

Though the state’s fiscal crisis dominated discussions, the bills passed this year make it easier for Connecticut residents to remain safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Michelle Cook
A Healthy Connecticut
Nothing is more important than the health of you and your family. We focused on several bills this year to help keep everyone in Connecticut healthy.

BANNING TOXIC CHEMICALS
PA 09-159 [HB 6724] – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
» Removes the harmful chemical Bisphenol-A (BPA) from baby bottles, reusable food and beverage containers, and plastic dinnerware
» Prevents dangerous developmental and reproductive effects, specifically in children

PA 09-214 [HB 6433] – EFFECTIVE: Upon Passage
» Extends the same health insurance coverage available for one’s biological children to one’s stepchildren
» Prevents children from being disadvantaged if family health coverage is only available through the stepparent

EMERGENCY RESTROOM ACCESS
PA 09-120 [HB 6328] – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
» Provides access to employee restrooms to people with certain medical conditions
» Limits liability to businesses if customer is injured while in an employee-only area

Military Families
Members of the military provide so much in the service of our nation. This session we passed laws which provide vital support to these men and women, as well as their families.

MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF FUND
PA 09-165 [HB 6394] – EFFECTIVE: Upon Passage
» Provides access to grants to the immediate family members of a member of the military
» Requires the grant money be used for necessary personal care, due to the hardships of military service

Government Efficiency
Making government function more efficiently is especially important during these difficult economic times. This year we took important steps to reduce the size of government and streamline some important functions.

PROBATE COURT REFORM
PA 09-182 [HB 6583] – EFFECTIVE: Upon Passage
» Makes the probate court system sustainable for local case load demands
» Establishes a commission to consolidate courts and create new districts
» Reduces the total number of probate courts to less than 50 statewide
» Changes the current basis of compensating probate court judges, from fees the court collects to population and workload

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TORRINTON SPOTLIGHT: LOCAL NURSING PROGRAM
PA 09-130 [HB 6656] – EFFECTIVE: 07.01.09
There is a continual shortage of nurses both in our state and across our nation. Because of this and the need for more local educational options, I cosponsored a bill which allows Northwestern Connecticut Community College to seek any federal funding necessary to establish a nursing program. I feel that both residents of Torrington and patients everywhere will benefit greatly.

TORRINTON SPOTLIGHT: CHRISTMAS VILLAGE
PA 09-158 [HB 6411] – EFFECTIVE: 07.01.09
Thousands of visitors flock each year to Torrington’s Christmas Village. But due to an oversight in past legislation, it became illegal to have reindeer at this wonderful event. I am happy to say that we fixed that law this session. Once again, Christmas Village will be able to invite a few of Santa’s furry assistants to join in the festivities.

Public Safety
Keeping the public safe and secure in our neighborhoods and on our streets is one of the key functions of government. This session, we made several advancements to protect those in our public spaces.

INTERSECTION SAFETY
PA 09-372 [HB 346] – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
» Allows cities and towns to adopt “blocking the box” rules
» Prohibits cars and trucks from driving through certain intersections if doing so blocks other vehicles from being able to cross the intersection
» Encourages more free flowing traffic and less stress on motorists, especially during times of heavy traffic

DEFIBRILLATORS
PA 09-152 [HB 3185] – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
» Provides immunity to a person who uses an automatic external defibrillator on an individual in need
» Encourages regular citizens to make every effort to save someone’s life without the fear of prosecution

“MOVE OVER” LAW
PA 09-171 [HB 966] – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
» Requires a motorist to move over one lane slow down when passing a stationary emergency vehicle on travel lanes, breakdown lanes, or highway shoulders
» Requires a motorist to move over one lane from the lane of an emergency vehicle when safe and reasonable

TORRINTON SPOTLIGHT: PROPERTY VALUES
PA 09-132 [HB 954] – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
» Establishes a new CT law regarding stationary emergency vehicles on travel lanes, breakdown lanes, or highway shoulders
» Requires a motorist approaching stopped emergency vehicles to immediately slow down
» Requires a motorist to move over one lane from the lane of an emergency vehicle when safe and reasonable