

State Representative
MICHELLE COOK

Safeguarding Our Children
Torrington’s children need our protection from the numerous harms that exist. This legislative session I worked hard with my colleagues to pass legislation to do just that.

TORRINGTON SPOTLIGHT: GREEN CLEANING IN SCHOOLS

PA 09-81 | HB 6496 – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
I cosponsored legislation to establish a green cleaning program in every local school. Schools in Torrington have been leading the state, as they already use green products regularly. With this new law, schools in Connecticut will soon be a healthier and safer place for children to learn, as harsh chemicals will be replaced with friendly, effective alternatives at no added cost.

NEW SAFEGUARDS AGAINST SEX OFFENDERS

PA 09-199 | SB 533 – EFFECTIVE: 09.01.09
» Requires the Department of Public Safety to notify the superintendents of schools in communities where sex offenders live or plan to live

ELIMINATING CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO MACHINE GUNS

PA 09-62 | SB 358 – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
» Bans selling, giving and transferring machine guns to people under age 16
» Increased penalties: fines up to \$1,000 and imprisonment of up to 10 years

PROMPT TREATMENT OF ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS

PA 09-155 | SB 755 – EFFECTIVE: 08.15.09
» Permits some students with asthma or allergies to carry inhalers and epi-pens in school
» Allows students to self-administer with proper authorization
» Adds licensed athletic trainers to the list of school personnel permitted to administer medication

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Michelle leads the House of Representatives in the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of a General Assembly session day.

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

CAPITOL NEWS 2009

OFFICE HOURS

5:15 PM TO 6:30 PM

Torrington Child Care Center 338 Kennedy Drive, Torrington
Monday, November 30

Please stop by and share your questions or concerns.



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Assisting our Seniors

Seniors deserve to feel physically safe and economically secure in their daily lives. To help ensure this is the case, we passed several new legislative initiatives.

AFFORDABLE ELDERLY HOMECARE

- PA 09-64 | SB 814 – EFFECTIVE: 04.01.10
- » Expands access to affordable homecare support services
 - » Helps seniors remain independent in their own homes rather than nursing homes
 - » Expands personal care assistance services to more of our seniors

SILVER ALERT SYSTEM

- PA 09-109 | SB 451 – EFFECTIVE: 07.01.09
- » Creates an emergency notification system similar to the Amber Alert
 - » Allows law enforcement agencies to issue public alerts for missing seniors to increase the likelihood of finding someone quickly

PATIENTS RIGHTS AT A NURSING HOME

- PA 09-168 | SB 455 – EFFECTIVE: 10.01.09
- » Expands the Nursing Home Bill of Rights to prohibit the solicitation of donations or gifts as a condition of admission
 - » Extends protections to third parties, such as families and friends

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 09-103 | HB 6572 – 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

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR STEPCHILDREN

- PA 09-124 | HB 5433 – 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 09-129 | 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

TORRINGTON SPOTLIGHT: LOCAL NURSING PROGRAM

PA 09-130 | HB 6336 – 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.



Members of the Torrington Early Childhood Collaborative presented Michelle with the 2009 “Children’s Champion” Award.

Military Families

Members of the military give 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 09-163 | 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

MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM

- PA 09-10 | HB 6406 – EFFECTIVE: UPON PASSAGE
- » Requires state agencies to make counseling services available to both reservists being called up to active duty and their family
 - » Eases the strain on a family during a very difficult period of transition

TORRINGTON SPOTLIGHT: CHRISTMAS VILLAGE

PA 09-198 | HB 6552 – 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 furrier assistants to join in the festivities.

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 6385 – 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

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 09-171 | SB 966 – 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 09-59 | SB 1089 – 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



TORRINGTON SPOTLIGHT: PROPERTY VALUES

PA 09-60 | SB 997 – EFFECTIVE: 07.01.09

My office received numerous complaints about the revaluation process in Torrington this year. Because of these complaints, I cosponsored legislation that allowed city leaders to delay using these new property values until 2011. This delay will give our economy time to recover and allow residents to continue to pay property taxes based on more realistic home values.

“MOVE OVER” LAW

- PA 09-121 | HB 5894 – 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



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Call for your copy of 2009 Acts Affecting Seniors, Health Care or Veterans.