



Rep. Cook and Rep. Lonnie Reed discuss policy in the House Chamber

Senior News

I am proud to support these and other services for our senior citizens.

Money Follows the Person is expanded under the state budget, allowing more nursing home residents to transition back home. This program provides Medicaid funds for home care, which benefits families and saves taxpayers money.

Home Care for Elders program has been protected despite an earlier proposal to raise the program cost-sharing from 6 to 15 percent for people in the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders, the Legislature successfully set a lower rate of 7 percent.

Help with Grocery Bills through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (the Food Stamp program) has grown, making it easier for seniors to qualify and better afford their groceries. A household of two can earn up to \$2,248 monthly and still qualify for assistance. More information is available at: 800.742.6906.

ConnPACE may be available if you are a Connecticut resident age 65 or older, or with a disability age 18 or older, and you are NOT eligible for Medicare

Grandparents Rights will be the subject of a study aimed at enhancing their ability to seek visitation rights. A task force will report its recommendations to the legislature by February 1, 2012.

Nursing Home Grievance committees will be established at each facility to ensure residents' concerns are resolved in a timely manner. Two nursing home employees and one elected resident will comprise the committee.

Streamlining Government

To address the state budget crisis we cut costs and streamlined government. Connecticut is being run more efficiently this year with:

- » State agency consolidations
- » Upgraded technology
- » Over \$700 million in spending cuts
- » No borrowing to pay for ongoing expenses
- » Fully funded pension obligations
- » A commitment to staying below the constitutional spending cap

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State Representative

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MICHELLE COOK

State Representative

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65th House District

Dear Friends,

Thank you for giving me the honor and privilege of representing you at the State Capitol. I worked tirelessly to earn your trust by defending our education system, and protecting services for seniors and veterans, while working to responsibly close our state's budget gap and grow jobs.

During the last legislative session, the Legislature took decisive steps to help Connecticut turn the corner toward recovery and prosperity. New laws are taking effect that create jobs, help cities and towns, protect needed services and improve the lives of hard-working families across our state.

I am proud to have supported stabilizing your property taxes by voting for nearly \$27 million in state aide to Torrington.

In addition, I worked on several issues important to Torrington, such as saving Oliver Wolcott Technical High School.

Please contact me if you have any questions on these programs or any other issue. I hope you find the information helpful and welcome your comments and suggestions.

Best Wishes,

Michelle Cook

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

CAPITOL REPORT 2011

State Representative

Michelle Cook

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Rep. Cook delivers the Pledge of Allegiance in the House Chamber with Speaker Chris Donovan

Educating our Children

This year, we have taken a number of steps to ensure that all children have access to a quality education and opportunities for academic excellence, through:

- » New efforts to close the achievement gap
- » Tools for underperforming schools
- » Streamlining the process to get qualified teachers in charter schools
- » New Early Childhood Education Cabinet

We also have markedly increased the educational requirements for teachers and early childhood educators in state-funded programs. By 2015, 50 percent of the teaching staff must have a degree in early childhood education, childhood development or a related field, or they must have a teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood or special education. By 2020, all teaching staff must have one of those degrees.

I lead the effort to preserve and improve our vocational technical school system, including Torrington's Oliver Wolcott, and helped to create a task force to recommend improvements.

Getting Tough on School Bullying

In response to growing concerns over increasing acts of school bullying, we passed legislation that strengthens school bullying laws and requires all school employees to complete annual training programs dealing with the problem.

The bill makes the school principal responsible to investigate and address bullying and electronic cyber-bullying whether it occurs in or out-of-school.

Proper Identification for Healthcare Workers

Originally suggested by Torrington resident John Mastrocola, I championed legislation to require health care personnel to display photo identification that details their certification so that patients can be certain they are being treated by a qualified medical professional.

WATCH VIDEOS ONLINE
at my website – housedems.ct.gov/Cook

Protecting Domestic Violence Victims

Rep. Cook on landmark legislation that increases the protections for victims of domestic violence and stalking.

Keeping Substances Away From Kids

Rep. Cook and Lt. Michael Emanuel on the dangers of synthetic marijuana and salvia.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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State Representative Michelle Cook

If you need additional assistance or have questions, please contact me:

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Saluting Our Veterans

Providing a better life to those who protect us

Veterans, along with their families, have sacrificed so much so we can enjoy our freedom and a democratic way of life. Veterans returning from foreign engagements need to know that we appreciate what they do for us and that means passing legislation that helps them and their families.

Veterans' bills passed this session:

- » Offer veterans license plates to a member of the U. S. armed forces or his or her surviving spouse
- » Allow veteran status to be on a driver's license or identity card
- » Provide disabled wartime veterans with free parking, admission, and boat access parking to state recreational areas
- » Expand the waiver of property tax interest for certain armed forces members in Iraq and Afghanistan
- » Waive the \$20 fee for one certified copy of a veteran's death certificate when requested by family
- » Create a one-stop website for services available for veterans

Protecting the Lives of Connecticut's Children

We can't forget that children need our help in emergency situations which is why we amended the state's civil preparedness plan to include day care centers and activities focusing on children and youth.

The bill requires:

- » Children's evacuation and removal to a safe location
- » Parents to be notified
- » Reunification of parents with their children
- » Care for children with special needs

Protecting Children from Synthetic Marijuana

This year Torrington police brought to my attention the increased hospitalization and risks caused by synthetic marijuana. I introduced legislation that was unanimously adopted to ban the sale and possession of this insidious substance.



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Better Health Care Access & Affordability

The state is now closer to the goal of guaranteeing affordable health insurance for all Connecticut residents. The legislature:

- » Opened the state employee healthcare plan to municipal employees and nonprofits
- » Established the Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange where individuals and companies with up to 50 employees can compare and purchase health insurance
- » Required insurance coverage of MRIs for breast cancer screening if a woman is found to have "dense" breast tissue

Helping Domestic Violence Victims

Domestic Violence laws have been strengthened by:

- » making it easier for victims to get a restraining orders
- » giving law enforcement more tools to protect our community
- » requiring law enforcement to arrest a person who commits a violent crime against a person they are dating
- » improving access for victims to support services

The law also creates a task force that will recommend improvements to law enforcement procedures relating to family violence and enforcement of protective orders.

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