

## PROTECTING THE ELDERLY

This legislative year, we passed many more laws to protect our seniors from potential abuse. In situations where abuse or neglect is suspected, the Department of Social Services can now petition a probate court to gain access to that person's home to make an assessment. For the purpose of these investigations, the definition of neglect has also been expanded to include elderly people who do not live alone, but whose caretaker fails to arrange for the necessary services to keep an elderly person healthy. We also passed laws that will keep nursing home and residential care home residents safer by requiring the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services to notify a resident's designee of suspected abuse or neglect within 24 hours.

## ESTABLISHING A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR RESIDENTS OF CONTINUING-CARE RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

This year, we created a bill of rights for senior citizens living in continuing care retirement communities. This bill of rights gives residents a voice in decisions that affect them within these communities. It requires transparency regarding the financial stability of the facility, and notification to residents of major construction or any changes in ownership. It also gives residents more independence in making decisions about their medical care and assisted living services and requires reasonable accommodations for disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## AUTHORIZING PHARMACISTS TO DISPENSE DRUGS IN 90 DAY QUANTITIES

Sometimes illness or difficulty with transportation can make it hard to get to the pharmacy to refill a monthly prescription. It also can be a challenge if you are heading south for the winter and need your medications. This session, we introduced legislation that enables you to get a 90 day supply. This will allow you to have a three-month supply of a prescription and not have to worry about getting to the pharmacy each month. Co-pays and other insurance restrictions still apply.

## PATIENT DESIGNATED CAREGIVERS

Some patients end up returning to the hospital soon after discharge because they had not been instructed properly on their follow-up care or were unable to follow instructions. A new law called the CARE (Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable) Act, requires hospitals to document a caregiver (who has been chosen by the patient) in the patient's discharge plan. The hospital must attempt to notify the caregiver of the patient's discharge, and to instruct the caregiver on any post-discharge tasks with which the patient will need assistance.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

**MICHELLE COOK**

PROUDLY SERVING THE 65TH HOUSE DISTRICT | TORRINGTON



Rep. Cook with local author and Korean War Veteran Michael Galitello.

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

**MICHELLE COOK**

## CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It has been an honor to represent you in the General Assembly for another term.

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. Thankfully, we worked to increase municipal aid in order to ease property taxes.

I am happy to report that I was able to secure \$153 million in state funding for Oliver Wolcott Technical High School. This grant will permit the school to build a brand new building for its rapidly increasing student population and will allow many more students to attend this fantastic school.

In addition, we passed several measures this session to benefit our local sportsmen. Starting this October, bow hunters will now be permitted to hunt deer on private property on Sundays. I also fought to restore state funding for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's pheasant stocking program.

This session, I worked hard to ensure that our own Charlotte Hungerford Hospital received over \$3 million in additional state aid. I am extremely disappointed that Governor Malloy has decided to cut \$4 million in funding from our hospital. Please know that ensuring that Torrington families have access to high-quality healthcare is one of my top priorities and I will be working with my colleagues in the legislature and the Speaker of the House to mitigate these cuts.

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,

Michelle L. Cook



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Rep. Cook testifying in favor of legislation which would provide health insurance coverage for firefighters undergoing cancer related care and treatment.

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**PREVENTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND OPIOID OVERDOSE**

According to 2013 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than half of the drug overdose deaths in the United States were related to pharmaceutical drugs. To help combat this public health problem, we passed legislation requiring prescribers (physicians, physician assistants, APRNs and dentists) to get trained in how to properly prescribe controlled substances. If prescribing more than a 72-hour supply of any controlled substance, the practitioner must check the patient's record in the prescription drug-monitoring program, and report those prescriptions to the program immediately. Pharmacists will also be allowed to prescribe opioid antagonists, used to treat drug overdoses, if they receive special training and certification to do so.



Rep. Cook reviewing legislation with Public Health Committee Chairman Rep. Matthew Ritter.

**BUDGET COMPROMISE**

This year, the legislature worked diligently to adopt a budget that represents the wide-ranging priorities of our diverse state. Facing projected deficits over the next two years, over a billion dollars of cuts have been made to the current services biennium budget, and over \$130 million was cut from the Appropriations proposed budget. General Fund spending growth is under 4%, and millions will be saved through reductions in state employee workers' compensation costs and cancelling of overtime. The budget is balanced, under the spending cap, and invests in Connecticut's transportation infrastructure which is critical to our economic future. By investing in transportation projects, such as roads, bridges, and ports, we are encouraging smart growth and bringing sustainable jobs home to Connecticut.

**CITY OF TORRINGTON  
 FISCAL YEAR 2017 AID FROM THE STATE**

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Education Cost Sharing                 | \$24,780,540        |
| PILOT: State Owned Property            | \$249,421           |
| PILOT: Colleges & Hospitals            | \$254,799           |
| Pequot Revenue Sharing                 | \$257,271           |
| School Transportation                  | \$419,122           |
| Grant for Municipal Projects           | \$605,345           |
| Town Aid Road                          | \$465,796           |
| Adult Education                        | \$128,580           |
| Local Capital Improvement Program      | \$258,790           |
| Senate Bill 1: Sales Tax Revenue       | \$1,133,394         |
| <b>Total State Funds to Torrington</b> | <b>\$28,553,058</b> |

Most car owners will see a cut in their motor vehicle tax beginning in 2016 as we capped the car tax mill rate statewide at 32 mills for July 2016 and 29.36 mills in July 2017. No one's car tax goes up under this plan.

In addition, increased state aid for every city and town will allow municipalities to lower their mill rates. This lessens the property tax burden currently borne solely by families and small businesses in our community.

Towns with a larger number of tax-exempt properties (e.g. state property, churches, colleges and hospitals) receive additional aid for further property tax relief as well. Military veterans' retirement pay will now be 100% exempt from the state income tax.



Rep. Cook with students, educators, and administrators from vocational-agriculture schools during their visit to the Capitol.

**ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS**

This year, we advanced legislation that recognizes the important sacrifices that veterans have made while defending our country. We have increased services available to veterans on state college and university campuses; established the Connecticut Women Veterans' Program; created the Veterans to Agriculture Program and we are ensuring veterans have housing.

**STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA**

This year, we directed the State Department of Education (SDE) to designate a point person who will help parents and local boards of education identify students with dyslexia and intervene with appropriate help. Teachers-in-training will now be required to undergo 12 hours of preparation in effective literacy instruction using current best practices. Finally, the legislature granted the SDE an extension in their rollout of new reading assessments that will help identify students at risk for dyslexia. The additional time ensures successful implementation of a terrifically important program.

**REDUCING REQUIRED TESTING IN SCHOOLS**

Standardized tests have recently come under a lot of scrutiny. One area of concern is that there are simply too many tests. Juniors in high school are required to take the SBAC exam at a time when many are already taking college admission tests like the SAT and ACT. We passed a law that waives the SBAC test for all 11th graders and replaces the exam with a free SAT test.

**STUDENT LOAN RATES DROP**

The Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) announced that it will offer a fixed interest rate of 4.95 percent for new student loans, down from its current rate of 6.75 percent. 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 percent.