

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

MICHAEL D'AGOSTINO

PROUDLY SERVING THE 91ST DISTRICT | HAMDEN

Dear Neighbor,

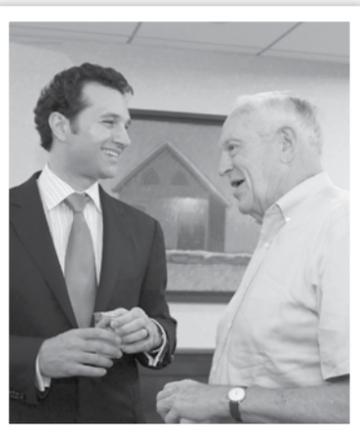
The 2014 legislative session ended recently and I want to update you about what we have been up to in Hartford. Each year brings a new set of challenges, and the 2014 session was no different. This year was a short three-month session, but I am proud of the work that we got done in such a short period of time. This newsletter highlights some of those accomplishments, including the UI tree-trimming bill that many of you worked so hard to pass.

In addition to these legislative highlights, I want to note the fact that Hamden will receive a combined \$34,442,644 in direct state aid. This includes money for our schools, our infrastructure and to make up for the taxes that Quinnipiac does not pay for the property that it owns. (As many of you know, we are working on that issue as well: if the university purchases a private home and then rents it out to students, it should pay taxes like any other landlord in town). The combined aid that we secured for the town is approximately \$1.9 million more than last year. It is still not as much as we should be getting, however, and I'll be back next year to make sure that Hamden is not ignored.

In addition to that direct funding, I am pleased to have obtained four state grants to build and maintain playgrounds, totaling \$180,000. The funds will go toward playground improvements at three Hamden elementary schools, West Woods School, Bear Path School, and Shepherd Glen School, as well as for a new play area for the preschool program at the Alice Peck School. These play spaces allow children to be active during the school day, which studies have shown increases their concentration in the classroom and helps them to learn valuable social skills while also getting the exercise they need for a healthy life.

I hope you find this, and the rest of the information in this newsletter helpful. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to me if I can ever be of help to you or your family. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your representative.

Sincerely,



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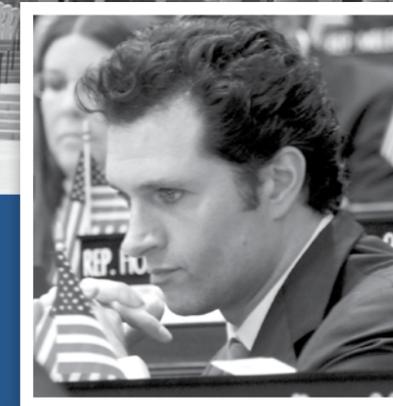
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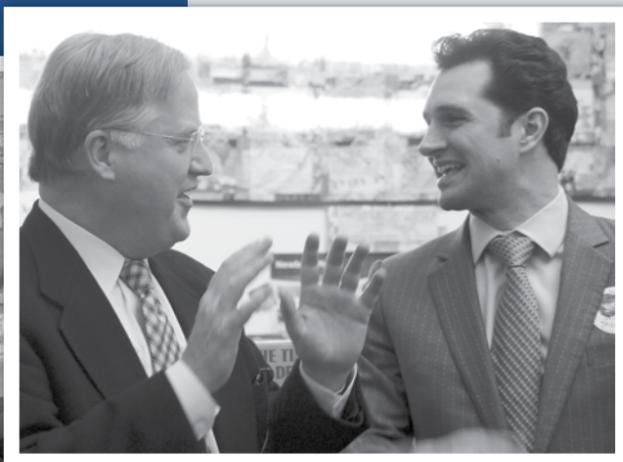
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

It is undisputed that early childhood education is critical to a child's development, providing a solid foundation for future learning. Children from middle and upper income families literally hear millions of more words by the time they reach kindergarten than their peers from lower income families. That is an achievement gap that takes years to remedy. When I was on the Board of Education in Hamden, we set up innovative pre-school programs to close this gap, but we always felt we could have done more if we had the funds to expand our offerings.

Now we do. This year, the legislature formally established the Office of Early Childhood Education. It will administer programs and funding to help our children from birth until elementary school. This coordinated system of care will better educate and care for our most impressionable population in an efficient and holistic way. The newly established Office of Early Childhood improve access to preschool programs and achieve universal pre-kindergarten in Connecticut. In the meantime, we have increased school readiness reimbursements and added 1,020 new preschool slots. We also created a floor rather than a ceiling for Competitive School Districts, allowing districts like Hamden to receive grants to accommodate additional preschool spaces.



Shepherd Glen students and Principal Joe DiBacco celebrate receiving \$35,000 in state bonding for a new playground



Representative D'Agostino and House Speaker Brendan Sharkey celebrate passage of the bill making any proposed tree-trimming by UI subject to resident input and authorization.

GO GREEN:
To sign up for electronic copies of my newsletters contact me at Michael.DAgostino@cga.ct.gov and let me know that you would prefer email updates.

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TREE TRIMMING

Most people agree that dead, damaged and dying trees require pruning or even removal to ensure both public safety and the viability of our public infrastructure. But plans by our utility companies to remove all trees -- even healthy ones -- simply because they are within eight feet of power lines went too far. Removing trees for no reason other than that they may interfere with power distribution is shortsighted and does not take into account the environmental and economic benefits of our natural landscape.

In response to concerns expressed by residents, I worked to give Hamden homeowners more say over whether trees on or near their property can be cut down or trimmed by utility companies. More care will be taken in deciding how much, and where cutting needs to be done. The utilities will need to work more closely with town residents and city officials to make these decisions. The burden will rest with utility companies to demonstrate the need to trim or remove trees they believe threaten the electricity supply.

I am proud of the legislation we passed to curtail the utilities' plans, but it would not have happened without the tireless efforts of many hundreds of Hamden residents who came to meetings, organized into advocacy groups and made their voices heard. The Whitneyville, Spring Glen and Dunbar Hill Civic Associations, as well as the Hamden Alliance for Trees, deserve our thanks and admiration for their efforts. They certainly have mine.



Representative D'Agostino speaks on behalf of residents at the Hamden public hearing on UI's proposed tree-trimming plans

HONORING OUR HERITAGE

As many of you know, there is an old, neglected cemetery on State Street (near the DMV) that has fallen into disrepair over the years. The property owner and management is nowhere to be found. This is the second time in the last few years that Hamden has been confronted with a neglected cemetery. In response, House Speaker Sharkey and I championed a bill that allows the town to seek a state grant to maintain the cemetery, while insulating it from liability if it does so. There are numerous neglected cemeteries throughout the state, some dating as far back as the Revolutionary War (including the State Street Cemetery). Fees collected by the Department of Public Health for the issuance of death certificates will be used to pay for the grants.



Hamden Education Association president Diane Marinaro and Representative D'Agostino discuss Hamden's early childhood initiatives with school administrators and state officials

CAPITOL UPDATE 2014