



# CAPITOL news

## STATE REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW FLEISCHMANN

### 18TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT, WEST HARTFORD



LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 3101  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591

July, 2006

Dear Neighbor,

I am glad to report that the 2006 legislative session was both productive and successful.

As House Chairman of the Education Committee, I had the opportunity to work on several initiatives that increase the state's investment in children. Most notably, we strengthened state support for special education; see the article to the right for details.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I was proud to support a revised budget that:

- Increased state support for economic development;
- Created new mechanisms for supporting cities and towns and relieving local property tax burdens; and
- Established new grants for after-school programs.

In addition to making these sensible modifications to the budget, the legislature took on a variety of other issues. We enacted a \$2.3 billion transportation package that, among other things, will establish commuter rail service along the New Haven - Springfield travel corridor. We funded more than 1,000 additional early childhood education slots - creating new educational opportunities for hundreds of Connecticut families. And we enacted statutes to protect the environment, improve school nutrition, and help low-income seniors pay their property tax bills.

The newsletter that follows summarizes most of these new statutes. Please feel free to contact my office by phone or e-mail if you would like more information on these or other matters.

Thank you for taking the time to read about these issues. Best wishes for a happy, healthy summer and fall.

Sincerely,

Andrew Fleischmann  
State Representative

## Strengthening State Support for Special Education



This year, the General Assembly greatly increased state support for special education - both in West Hartford and across Connecticut.

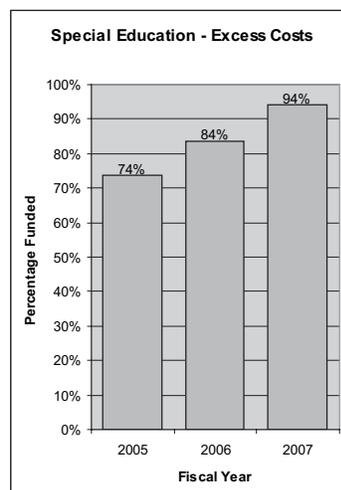
As House Chairman of the Education Committee, I am proud to report that we secured an additional \$20 million this year for special education excess costs (defined by statute as costs exceeding 4.5 times the average per student cost).

With these additional resources, the state now funds 94% of special education excess costs in the state. Just four years ago, the state funded only 72% of these costs. In each of the years since, we have increased support - to 74% two years ago, 84% last year, and now 94%. While I am disappointed that we have not yet reached 100%, I remain committed to that goal.

By strengthening state support for special education, we reduce the cost burden on local school systems. And we help ensure that all children receive the educational resources they need to succeed in life.

We can - and must - continue to lead the way on this issue. It's critical to our quality of life, and to our children's future.

(PA 06-186)



# The State Budget

## Increased State Funding For West Hartford New Appropriations Plan for Coming Fiscal Year Will Help Support West Hartford Schools, Roads, and Property Tax Relief

This spring, the General Assembly made a number of changes to the budget for Fiscal Year 2007 that will help the town of West Hartford.

As shown in the chart below, the revised budget for the coming fiscal year will bring more dollars to West Hartford in a number of different areas.

The most significant increases come in the following areas:

- **Property Tax Relief.** Our community will receive more than \$177,000 not originally included in the budget. These dollars grew from an initiative I proposed to help cities and towns address unanticipated energy costs. This new grant will help reduce local property tax pressures.
- **Special Ed Excess Costs.** West Hartford will receive \$133,000 more than previously budgeted.
- **Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT).** Our town will receive approximately \$74,000 more than originally budgeted in this area.

- **Town Aid for Roads (TAR).** State support in this area will increase by 7.2% - approximately double the rate of inflation - helping our town to continue its road improvements program. (PA 06-186)

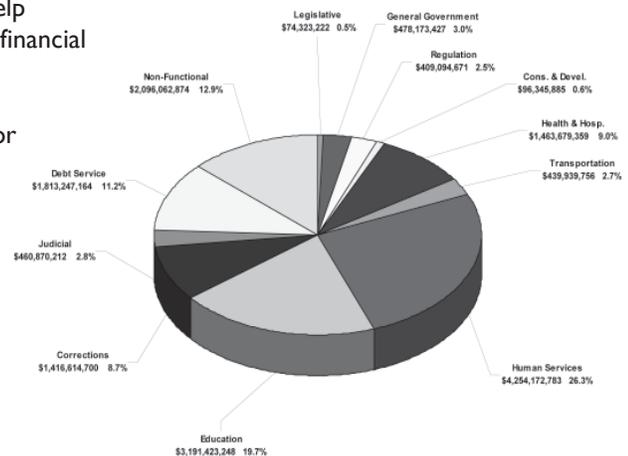
Grant	FY 06	FY 07	Difference	% Increase
PILOT:* State Property	\$322,495	\$337,107	\$14,612	4.5%
PILOT: Colleges and Hospitals	\$1,399,665	\$1,469,041	\$69,376	5.0%
Pequot/Mohegan	\$432,604	\$435,156	\$2,552	0.6%
Town Aid Roads	\$338,589	\$362,871	\$24,282	7.2%
Local Capital Improvement Program	\$440,138	\$440,138	0	0.0%
Property Tax Relief	0	\$177,277	\$177,277	-
Sub-total	\$2,933,491	\$3,221,590	\$288,099	9.8%
School Transportation	\$380,083	\$380,083	0	0.0%
Special Education - Excess	\$663,799	\$797,000	\$133,201	20.1%
Adult Education	\$81,909	\$81,909	0	0.0%
Education Cost Sharing	\$11,246,227	\$11,372,329	\$126,102	1.1%
Sub-total	\$12,372,018	\$12,631,321	\$259,303	2.1%
Total	\$15,305,509	\$15,852,911	\$547,402	3.6%

\*Payment in lieu of taxes  
Source: Legislative Office of Fiscal Analysis

## Stronger State Support for Jobs & Economic Development, Health Care and Education

With an awareness of how critical it is to improve Connecticut's economic climate and increase support for health care and education, the legislature made an array of improvements to the overall 2007 budget. These included:

- **Manufacturing Machinery Property Tax Exemption.** New laws exempt all manufacturing and recycling machinery and equipment from property taxes and reimburse towns for the revenue loss after a five year phase-in. This change will promote manufacturing in Connecticut and help stem recent company relocations. (PA 06-83 and PA 06-186)
- **Support for Microenterprises.** The legislature established a pilot program to help microenterprises prepare business plans, complete loan applications, and obtain financial and technical assistance from public and private agencies. (PA 06-166)
- **After School Grants.** A new law allows the State Department of Education, in consultation with an after-school committee, to administer after school grants for boards of education, municipalities, and tax exempt nonprofit organizations. My Appropriations subcommittee allocated \$5 million for this purpose, while requiring procedures to measure effectiveness of the grant program. (PA 06-192)
- **A Pilot Program for Individuals with Autism.** This new law requires the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) to establish a pilot program to provide coordinated services and support to people with autism spectrum disorders who do not also have mental retardation. In establishing this new program, Connecticut joins most other states in recognizing that the needs of individuals with autism continue past formal school years. (PA 06-188)



## Education

### Supporting Healthy Foods and Beverages in our Public Schools

In 2005, to my great disappointment, the Governor vetoed school nutrition legislation. I am proud to report that, this past spring, the General Assembly passed a bill - now signed into law - that limits the sale of unhealthy beverages and encourages distribution of healthy foods to students in our public schools. This new law, which I defended at length on the floor of the House, will help curb the epidemics of childhood obesity, type II diabetes, and other health problems that result from children consuming unhealthy foods and beverages.

Studies show that obesity among children has more than doubled in the past twenty years. Fifty percent of these children will become obese adults,



who will then be at an increased risk for major health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, gallbladder disease, and cancer. The legislature began addressing this challenge by banning the sale of unhealthy beverages in schools, and creating financial incentives for schools to sell only healthy foods. It's my hope that this groundbreaking law - the strongest of its kind in the nation - will put our school children on the path to healthier lives. (PA 06-63)

### Bringing Great New Teachers to the State's Neediest Schools

A new law that I championed this spring will, for the first time, allow Connecticut schools with the greatest teaching shortages to participate in the Teach for



America program (TFA). For more than a decade, TFA has recruited top students from top colleges and universities to spend a minimum of two years teaching in schools that are on the downside of the achievement gap. The law enacted this year allows the State Department of Education (SDE) to issue special permits to allow qualified graduates of Teach for America to work at the elementary or secondary level in public schools in Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven. (PA 06-192)

## Health Care

### Reducing Rates of Infection in Connecticut Hospitals

Under this act, a new Committee on Healthcare Associated Infections must develop, operate, and monitor a mandatory reporting system for patient infections that occur in a healthcare setting, were not found when the patient was admitted, and, if the setting is a hospital, meet specified National Centers for Disease Control criteria. The law requires the Department of Public Health to implement the committee's recommendations for mandatory reporting. This type of reporting - which I have supported since the 1990's - will increase public safety and incent hospitals to cut infection rates. (PA 06-142)

### The Healthy Children Initiative

Connecticut is leading the way in providing healthcare for children through the Healthy Kids Connecticut Committee, a group that's working to provide affordable, accessible healthcare to the 71,000 children in Connecticut who currently lack health insurance. It eliminates waste in the system and finds better ways to deliver health care to children - making it more accessible and easier to enroll.

The Healthy Kids Committee recognizes that preventive care is more cost effective than last minute, acute-care visits. This year, the committee sought to increase access to healthcare for young children by reducing the paperwork required for families to enroll in the HUSKY program (which provides health care for families meeting income guidelines). New laws passed this year guarantee that children enrolled in HUSKY will receive all necessary screening, diagnostic services, and treatment. In short, we have helped to ensure that these vital services are available to all children, regardless of changes in federal law. (PA 06-187)

## Seniors

### Property Tax Relief

A new law enacted this spring allows towns to freeze property taxes on homes owned by people aged 70 or more who have lived in-state for at least one year.

To qualify, homeowners must also meet the income limits for the "circuit breaker" program, which gives elderly homeowners a credit against their property taxes: \$27,700 for individuals and \$33,900 for married couples (adjusted annually for inflation). Those whose taxes are frozen under this program can still qualify for other tax relief programs.

I am proud to have supported this program; it represents one more way in which we are working to reduce excessive property tax burdens for people living on fixed incomes. (PA 06-176)



## The Neighborhood Update

This Issue Includes:

- The Latest On Education
- An Update On Campaign Finance Reform
- Useful Information for Seniors

Want more detail? Just contact my office and we can mail you information regarding:

Major Acts  
Banking  
Business  
Municipalities  
Education  
Firefighters  
Children  
Seniors

PHONE: 240-0420 OR E-MAIL: ANDREW.FLEISCHMANN@CGA.CT.GOV

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW FLEISCHMANN  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 3101  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106



## The Strongest Campaign Finance Reform Law in the U.S.

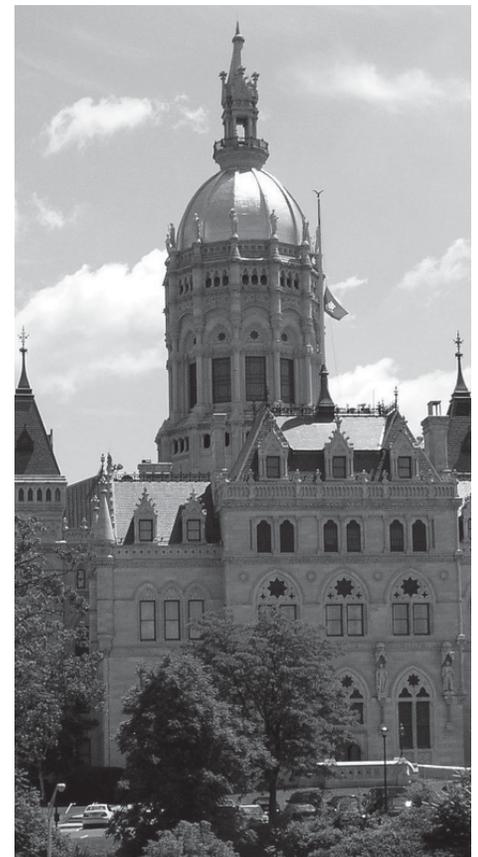
In the autumn of 2005, at the end of a special session of the legislature, the General Assembly passed an historic law establishing public financing of campaigns in Connecticut. This law - considered the strongest of its kind in the U.S. - includes provisions that will require participating candidates to: 1.) Abide by strict campaign spending limits; 2.) Refuse campaign contributions that exceed new, low limits (\$100 - compared to \$2,500 for a gubernatorial campaign today); and 3.) Reject campaign contributions by state contractors or registered lobbyists. Grants that participating candidates receive under the law will be funded by the unclaimed property account in the office of the State Treasurer.

Together, the reforms included in our new law will help take the big money out of state politics, returning control of our democracy to the people. Having advocated these reforms for more than a decade, I was proud to watch them signed into law in December of 2005.

Shortly after the law was signed, reform advocates found some drafting errors in the bill - which they and I urged be fixed during the 2006 session. I'm glad to report that, in a bi-partisan manner, the legislature addressed these issues, passing a bill on the last day of session. Among other things, the 2006 measure:

- Caps expenditures that can be made by party and legislative caucus committees on behalf of participating candidates;
- Eliminates a 72-hour non-severability clause that might have made the law inoperable;
- Enables minor party candidates to petition for public financing eligibility, raise funds accordingly, and qualify for supplemental grants if they meet certain criteria.

In short, this new law ensures that Connecticut remains at the forefront of good government reforms. As a long-time advocate of strengthening campaign laws and getting the big money out of politics, I am proud to have participated in the passage of this law as a member of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. (PA 06-137)



PRRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
HARTFORD, CT  
Permit No. 3937