

## 2007 Local Accomplishments

### Increased State Support for West Hartford

A very important part of my job representing the 18th House District is ensuring West Hartford receives its fair share of state funding. I am pleased to report the following grants and reimbursements from the state:

Total Education Grants	\$15,767,383	This funding is an increase of <b>\$4,013,875</b> over last year's total.
Total Aid Road Fund (TAR)	\$342,373	
Mashantucket Pequot/Mohegan Grants	\$434,784	
Local Capital Improvements (LoCIP)	\$438,758	
PILOT: State Owned Property	\$337,459	
PILOT: Colleges & Hospitals	\$1,472,669	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$18,793,426</b>	

This year, I was proud to support legislation requiring certain school buses to be retrofitted with new, advanced emissions-reducing systems. Under our new statute, school buses that don't currently meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emissions standards or use compressed natural gas or certified alternative fuels will have to install the new, clean emissions technology by September 1, 2010.



The West Hartford public school system will receive major additional capital support this year under legislation I drafted as Chair of the Education Committee. Conard High School will receive \$200,000 in additional funding to support renovations. In addition, the state will now cover 40% of any technology improvements our school system makes at Smith or Charter Oak Schools. Under the standard school construction formula, no technology costs are covered, but the state will make an exception this year in recognition of the "unique school" status that characterizes these magnet schools.



Picture: Conard High School, Summer of 2009

This spring, working with leaders in the State Senate, I drafted a new law that will increase security planning and upgrade security systems at schools and colleges across Connecticut. We established a new competitive grant for school security improvements, including security systems for school entrances, the purchase of key security equipment and safety training for school personnel. (PA 07-208)



## 2007 Legislative Update

This issue includes:

- The Latest on Education
- Useful Information for Seniors
- An Update on State Support for West Hartford

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## 2007 Legislative Update

Autumn, 2007



Dear Neighbor,

I write to provide you with information on the Connecticut General Assembly's productive 2007 session. I am glad to report that this session was a good one for both our state and our town.



As House Chairman of the Education Committee and the Appropriations Subcommittee for Education, I was able to promote a number of initiatives that will significantly increase state investments in our children. Among other things, we:

- Increased state support for education by \$181.8 million in FY 08 and \$80 million in FY 09. We eliminated the cap on the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula and raised the foundation of the grant, meaning that state support for West Hartford schools will increase by more than \$4 million in this current fiscal year alone.
- Strengthened state support for key health-care initiatives.
- Expanded quality after-school programs through additional competitive grant funding of more than \$2 million this year and next.

In addition to enacting a well balanced budget, the legislature addressed a number of other key issues. We passed new legislation to reduce illegal commerce in stolen and lost firearms; enacted energy legislation to promote conservation and increase supply; expanded access to the state's HUSKY health-care program for low-income children; and, to ensure quality early childhood education, adopted stronger accountability measures and increased investments in professional development and quality programming.

The newsletter that follows summarizes some key issues that the Assembly addressed during the 2007 session. Please feel free to contact my office by phone or e-mail if you would like further information on these or other matters.

Thank you for taking the time to read about these issues. I greatly appreciate it, as I believe that a well informed citizenry is the bedrock of our democracy. Best wishes to you and your family for a happy, healthy autumn.

Sincerely,  


Andy Fleischmann  
 State Representative, 18th District

## Stay Informed...

For the latest information on the issues affecting our district, please visit my Web site:  
[www.cga.ct.gov/hdo/018/](http://www.cga.ct.gov/hdo/018/)



## 2007 LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Working with my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee, I helped lead the fight for an historic increase in state support for local school systems, and strongly supported greater funding for quality health care as well. I'm glad to report that the new state budget reflects these priorities – meeting the critical needs of Connecticut residents.

More specifically, in the budget enacted this past spring:

- State support for cities and towns increases by \$221.3 million for the upcoming fiscal year and \$131.5 million for FY 09 – greatly reducing local property tax pressures.
- Funding for key health-care programs like HUSKY and Medicaid increases by \$336 million over the next two years, meaning improved quality and delivery of care.
- Much of the state budget surplus is being used to pay down long-term debt, reduce the unfunded liability in the state teachers' retirement system, pay off bonds and increase the balance in the state's 'rainy day' reserve fund.
- The state creates a new division of Autism Spectrum Disorders within the Department of Developmental Services (formerly DMR) in the coming fiscal year - to provide quality care and services to those diagnosed with autism.
- We establish a new \$10 million fund to update and repair our existing public housing stock.
- The state provides additional funding to help cover municipalities' costs of training firefighters.
- We greatly increase support for Connecticut's two higher education student grant programs – giving many more of our young people the opportunity to attend college in Connecticut.



## Seniors News Briefs

- As of October 1st, drivers aged 60 and up are eligible for an automobile insurance policy premium discount after successfully completing a course in accident prevention that has been approved by the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- To enable more seniors to live at home and reduce the need for costly nursing home care, we have created the Connecticut Homecare Option Program. This program allows participants to make deposits into a Homecare Trust Fund account; interest earned on fund accounts are exempt from the state income tax.

- The Assembly passed legislation that I supported to require that any nursing home, rest home, residential care home, or intermediate care facility for the mentally disabled that's considering closing or greatly reducing its total bed capacity first participate in a public



STATE REPRESENTATIVE ANDY FLEISCHMANN 18TH DISTRICT

## Improving Access to Quality Health-Care

Access to affordable, quality health care was a key priority for me and other House Democrats this session. In the end, we won improvements to the state's HUSKY Plan that are designed to help ensure quality health care for every child in Connecticut.

Highlights include:

- An increase in reimbursements paid to hospitals and Medicaid providers like physicians and dentists – the first such increase in these Medicaid fees since 1993. This change will increase the number of providers who offer care to Medicaid recipients, improving access to care.
- Expansion of the pool of children eligible for the HUSKY program. Children from families whose incomes are up to 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are now eligible (up from 150%).
- Presumptive HUSKY eligibility and expedited enrollment for uninsured newborns, with no premiums due for the child's first four months of life. This common sense change ensures that every newborn in our state will receive the care he or she deserves.
- Enhanced outreach programs to increase awareness of the HUSKY Plan and improve enrollment among eligible residents.
- Funding to expand the reach of Connecticut's school-based health centers – one of the most effective means of delivering health-care to children in our state.
- Investment in the state's fledgling electronic medical records program, designed to reduce error rates and increase efficiency in medical delivery.



## Enhancing Accountability in Education

New school accountability legislation passed overwhelmingly by the Education Committee, the House and the Senate ensures that Connecticut will be able to support and improve schools and school systems that must raise their performance levels.

Under this law, the state's commissioner of education will now do an educational assessment of any school system or school that fails to make academic progress for two successive years. And the commissioner is empowered to ensure that the school or school district implements measures we know improve student performance, including extended school days, weekend tutoring and summer school.

For school systems that fail to make progress for four years, the commissioner will put together an action plan that may include more sweeping improvements: creating a new curriculum, moving dollars from failed programs to more effective ones, replacing struggling personnel with star performers or - as a last resort - appointing a trustee to run the district in place of the superintendent. These steps put Connecticut in conformance with the troubled federal No Child Left Behind Act - but, unlike NCLB, will bring and fund changes that we know improve student performance.

In other key areas, too, our new law increases support for local programs and strengthens our focus on accountability and results:

- It establishes funding for 2,000 more poor children to receive early childhood education over the next two years, and provides these programs with technical assistance and professional development, ensuring high quality.
- It will, for the first time since the inception of Connecticut's Early Reading Success program measure the impact of local programs. By fall 2008, school systems funding programs that don't improve children's reading will have to switch to a proven program or forfeit state funding.
- And Connecticut's After School Program initiative will now require grant-winners to track the results, so that we can measure impact and support the most effective programs.

Clearly, Connecticut's new educational accountability law sets up a wide array of tools to help turn around struggling schools and school districts. Together, education stakeholders must now work together to begin a new day for education reform in our state.

Andy with West Hartford after-school program directors, including, from left to right; Joan Lord, Robin Loomis, Deborah Funke, and Diane Mouradjian.

## Strengthening Support for Education...

This year, I was proud to lead the fight for an historic increase in state support for education - both in West Hartford and across Connecticut.

Updating the state's Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula was critical to providing fairer funding for public schools and relief to local taxpayers.

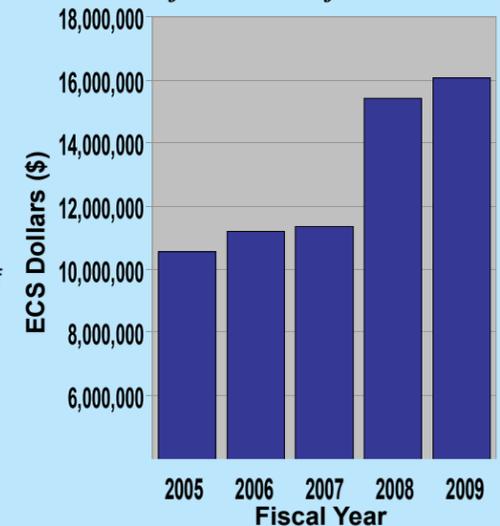
As House Chairman of the Education Committee, I am proud to report that we increased the foundation level of the ECS grant from \$5,891 to \$9,687 per student. This change increased state support for education in all towns – but particularly towns like ours, which had previously been subject to an arbitrary "cap" on state support.

In addition to raising the foundation of the formula, we enacted a long-overdue update in the data used to measure need among students; increased the weighting given for the presence of low-income and limited-English-proficiency students in schools; and modified the minimum grant levels to ensure that school districts

with the highest concentrations of need receive increased funding.

As the chart below shows, the result for the West Hartford school system was striking – an increase of more than \$4 million in the current fiscal year alone.

Increased Education Funding for West Hartford



## ... While Delivering Property Tax Relief

Along with my Co-Chair of the Education Committee, I devised a new approach to the Education Cost Sharing grant, adopted this spring by the legislature. We will now recognize districts' varying levels of success, incenting them to improve results by offering more property-tax relief to localities whose schools perform well, e.g., West Hartford.

We did this by creating a new "minimum budget requirement" (MBR) that requires municipalities to dedicate from 15% to 65% of their increased ECS funds to education – with each town's percentage determined by a formula that considers how much is already being spent per student, the relative per capita wealth of the community, and the percentage of students not reaching

proficiency on state mastery tests. In essence, towns with the greatest educational needs are required to dedicate the highest percentage of their ECS funds to their schools, while municipalities with better results and lesser needs have more dollars available for property tax relief. The state also now requires school systems which, overall, fail to achieve adequate yearly progress on mastery tests to spend an additional 20% increment of their ECS funds on their schools.

The net result is a new approach to state support for cities and towns that makes funds available for property tax relief and local schools in the right proportions.

