



Henry with Carol Coogan and East Hartford High School students at their first day of work in a summer youth employment and learning program.

## HISTORIC INVESTMENT MADE TO EDUCATION

This legislative session we made historic investments in education for our state. We increased the Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) grant by \$261 million – the largest increase in state history. East Hartford saw the largest increase in ECS funding ever.

Previously, any increase in a town's ECS grant had to increase a municipality's education budget, and there was no opportunity to provide taxpayer relief. Under new legislation, municipalities must spend at least the prior year's education budget, plus an amount ranging from 15% to 65% of their ECS increase, and the rest can be used to provide property tax relief. Towns who do not show adequate progress must use more of the ECS grant for educational programs.

We invested \$24 million in the

Independent College Student Grant and \$30 million for aid to public college students. Increased funding for early childhood programs will be \$24 million for two years.

Another top priority was in strengthening our commitment to Connecticut's students for after school programs. Over the next two years, the after school competitive grant program will receive \$2 million in new funds.

We also required the Department of Education to develop measures to test the effectiveness of the Early Reading Success grant program. Beginning July 1, 2008, the Early Childhood Education Cabinet will be required to begin the statewide evaluation of educational progress among children pre-K to grade 3.

Justin Kvadas and Henry testifying before the Select Committee on Children in support of the bill advocating no smoking in motor vehicles when small children are present.

## PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM SECOND HAND SMOKE

I was happy to have introduced legislation prohibiting smoking in motor vehicles with children. Ten-year old Justin Kvadas, a student at O'Connell School, contacted me and asked if I would propose this legislation. The purpose of the law is to educate the public and protect small children under 7 years old or 60 pounds from second hand smoke. A car is one of the smallest, most confined spaces in which a person can smoke. This is detrimental to a child, as they are held captive and can't escape the smoke of their parent's cigarette, especially when strapped into a car seat.

While I was not successful in getting final approval for this measure I was able to raise awareness of this important health issue. It is my intention to continue to pursue this legislation next year.



Dear Neighbor,

*I write to provide you with a summary of the 2007 legislative session of the Connecticut General Assembly.*

*I was disappointed we were not able to implement a more progressive income tax that would have benefitted most of my constituents. I had also hoped we would have been able to provide additional property tax relief.*

*We made a historic commitment to funding education with hopes that increased funding should help us keep our local property tax under control. We added \$336 million to health care funding over two years and increased coverage and access for the uninsured, mainly for children on the state HUSKY program. I am especially pleased that we were able to increase Medicaid rates for physicians, the first increase in rates in 18 years.*

*Personally, it is most rewarding to work with and have the support of the many individuals and community groups within the 10th District. I am honored to represent you in Hartford.*

*As always I look forward to hearing from you. .*

Henry

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Help for Seniors

www.CtHelpNet.org connects you to a network of elder services for Connecticut's senior citizens.

Capitol Phone: 240-8585

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## 2007 Capitol News



## IMPROVEMENTS TO EAST HARTFORD PARKS

I am pleased to announce the allocation of \$500,000 to be used for park improvements throughout the Town of East Hartford. Up for possible consideration for the funds are various projects such as the Dwyer Park parking lot project, tennis courts at McAuliffe Park, dugout repairs at Woodland Park, a football scoreboard for the field at Lower Goodwin, Little League

improvements at McAuliffe and Gorman Parks, a new pool filter at McAuliffe Park, the pavement of roads and parking at Gorman and Martin Parks, and the replacement of lockers at Terry Pool. I have been a strong advocate for this funding for improvement to town parks as these are the kind of services that make our community stronger and will also help keep kids off the streets.

## KEEPING GUNS OFF THE STREET

More than 10,000 firearms were stolen in Connecticut during a 10-year period from 1993 through 2002. Many of these guns end up on the streets of our cities. This landmark legislation requires that any person who lawfully possesses an assault weapon or firearm that is lost or stolen must report the incident to the proper law enforcement agencies. The person must make that report within seventy-two hours of when they discovered, or should have discovered, the loss or theft. The bill also establishes the crime of firearm trafficking. A person is guilty of trafficking, if the person knowingly and intentionally allows firearms they own or possess to be in the possession of someone who is prohibited from owning or possessing any firearm under state or federal law. Trafficking less than five firearms is a class C felony, and trafficking five or more firearms is a class B felony.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR - SALES TAX HOLIDAY ON CLOTHING

This year's **sales tax-free week for back to school shopping** will run from Sunday, **August 19<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, August 25<sup>th</sup>**. It applies to clothing and footwear under \$300.



Henry, Senator Joe Crisco, Representative Chris Stone, Senator George Meyer, Senator Gary LeBeau, Representative Richard Roy and Mayor Melody Currey with Governor Jodi Rell as she signs legislation banning the use of lawn pesticides at schools serving students in grade 6, 7 and 8. Connecticut already bans lawn care pesticides from the grounds of elementary schools.





## 2007 Capitol News

### ENERGY REFORM

The Energy Reform legislation passed this year will benefit consumers in the short and long term. Making the most suitable energy decisions for each household is extremely important in an effort to control usage.

- Rebates and tax exemptions for consumers who invest in energy-efficient technology. These rebates or tax breaks will give consumers an incentive to replace old air conditioners, boilers, freezers or other appliances with new models that use the latest technology and less energy.
- The establishing of a sales tax exemption on automobiles that average more than 40 mpg. For example, consumers purchasing a \$30,000 dollar car will see an \$1,800 savings.
- New incentives to encourage Connecticut consumers to “go green.” Such incentives will include the ability to buy CFL’s (compressed florescent light bulbs) and energy star products sales tax free
- The redirecting of conservation fees currently charged on all customers’ monthly bills back to the Connecticut Clean Energy and Conservation funds. These funds are then freed up for programs focused on developing cutting edge conservation and clean energy programs.
- Bringing the option to install an “advanced meter” to all Connecticut consumers. Advanced meters allow households or businesses to pay for their power usage based on “Time of Use” pricing. Households that choose to run their appliances during off peek evening hours will finally be able to see real financial savings in their monthly bill.

### EMINENT DOMAIN

We made an effort to balance individual property rights with a town’s need to grow their tax base. A town may still take land by eminent domain, but there are more barriers to do so and property owners have a greater chance of redress.

It now requires a two-thirds vote by a town’s legislative body to approve taking of land for economic development, a report explaining the public benefits, and payment of 125 percent of the average of two ap-



praisals for the property. It also allows court appeals of land takings and gives former owners first right to buy back a property if a development project is not completed.

It also creates another layer of protection for the property owner by creating the office of Property Rights Ombudsman that can undertake a feasibility study to determine the value and impact of “goodwill,” which refers to relocation assistance and potential loss of business due to relocation.

## BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Allocates an additional \$47 million in state health care, ranging from expansion of the HUSKY health insurance program to financial assistance for insurance premiums.
- ✓ Provides \$39 million to nursing homes for a 2.9% rate increase for next fiscal year and a 3% increase for the non-profits.
- ✓ Increases the Educational Cost Sharing grant by \$442 million over the next two years. East Hartford will see a \$4.8 million increase for this year, which is the greatest increase in history.
- ✓ Creates a Division of Autism Spectrum Disorders under the newly named state Department of Developmental Disabilities.
- ✓ Sets aside \$136 million of this year’s nearly \$1 billion surplus for the state’s Rainy Day Fund.
- ✓ Provides \$94 million in fiscal year 2008 and \$121 million in fiscal year 2009 to increase reimbursement rates to doctors, hospitals, clinics, dentists and ophthalmologists that treat patients covered by Medicaid.
- ✓ Sets aside \$27.2 million over two years for grants to students attending public colleges and \$16.2 million over two years for students attending private colleges.
- ✓ Raises the cigarette tax from \$1.51 to \$2 per pack. There are **no** changes to the income tax rate structure
- ✓ Expands the state’s tax credit program for the film industry. This time, it provides tax credits for capital projects, such as new studio space for film and digital media
- ✓ Fully funds all 270 students clients of the Department of Mental Retardation who will graduate from high school and need supportive adult services.
- ✓ Over the next two years more than \$2 million in new funding will be put into expanding after school programs.
- ✓ Provides over \$100 million in railway operations and \$110 million in bus operations.



Henry with East Hartford High School students visiting with Speaker Jim Amann during their tour of the State Capitol.

## HEALTHFIRST CT AND HEALTHY KIDS INITIATIVES

I am happy that we were able to make several improvements to our current health care system in an effort to expand access to quality, affordable health care. These improvements include:

- ✓ Expands HUSKY to give access to around 10,000 more residents.
- ✓ Establishes a broad outreach program to reach all eligible participants.
- ✓ Expands HUSKY A coverage for pregnant women and requires automatic enrollment of uninsured newborns.
- ✓ Increased rates under Medicaid will allow health care providers to see more patients.
- ✓ Increased funding will be given to the School-Based Health Clinics so that they can provide transportation and increased access.
- ✓ Makes a state commitment to public health data collection and online license renewal system to allow health care professionals to expedite renewal process.



### HONORING OUR COMMITMENT TO TEACHERS’ RETIREMENT

I am happy the legislature took action to address the unfunded liability in Connecticut’s Teachers’ Retirement Fund. With a state liability of more than \$6.9 billion, an immediate addition of \$300 million from state surplus over the next two years will be added to the Teachers’ Retirement Fund. To strengthen the financial footing of the Fund, and to save taxpayers money, a comprehensive plan has been developed allowing for

\$2 billion in pension obligation bonds to be sold. These bonds will be payable over 25 years at current interest rates (approximately 5.6%), less than what the state is currently paying on the unfunded liability (8.5%). A savings will be realized through lowering debt service payments and investing the proceeds on the pension obligation bonds sale in the Teachers’ Retirement Fund, which has historically earned an average of 8.9%



### CONTROLLING INSURANCE COSTS

#### EXTENDING HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

Affordable health insurance for our older children is hard to find, but relief is on the way. Children up to age 26, including those going to school out-of-state full-time, and those living out-of-state with a custodial parent pursuant to a court order, can be covered for health care under their parent’s insurance policy, as of January 1, 2009.

#### CANCER TREATMENT

Costs can be prohibitive when a patient can only receive their treatment at a hospital outside the network of their health insurance policy or HMO contract. Now, for certain cancer clinical trials, patients will only need to pay their usual in-network service co-payment or deductible required under their health plan.