

Education



Henry with students from the 6th Grade Academy, Justin Kvadas, Paul Caccavale and Rhiana Easton. They brought 60 classmates with them to testify in favor of Henry's bill to prohibit smoking in vehicles with small children who are required to be in a child restraint system.

Smoking with Minors in Motor Vehicles - For the second year in a row we were unsuccessful in trying to eliminate smoking in vehicles when a child 6 years or younger or weighing less than 60 pounds is in the vehicle. The age and weight of the child mirror the law for children who must be in a state-approved child restraint seat. We made progress by having a positive vote in the powerful Judiciary Committee and I will continue to pursue this important public health issue.

School Funding - Starting in Fiscal Year 2010 towns must allocate any annual increase in the state Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant to education spending in order to meet its minimum budget requirement (MBR). East Hartford as a priority school district is also required to add an additional 20%. East Hartford's total MBR requirement is 76.6% of the state ECS increase. East Hartford as a designated priority school district receives additional funding under the state ECS formula to meet its students' needs.



Congratulations to **Christopher Testa**, valedictorian, and **Jason Wolkon**, salutatorian, for the East Hartford High 2008 graduating class.

Henry with Jonathan Daube, outgoing President of Manchester Community College, when Dr. Daube was presented a State of Connecticut citation recognizing him as the recipient of the New England Board of Education award as Educator of the Year for Connecticut. In honor of Dr. Daube's leadership, the Great Path Academy middle college high school building will be named after him.



2008 Legislative Bulletin

State Representative Henry Genga

Legislative Office Building, Room 5007

Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Henry.Genga@cga.ct.gov

www.housedems.ct.gov/genga

(860) 240-8585

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
PERMIT NO. 3937

CALL ME FOR YOUR

COPY OF:

- 2008 Senior Laws
- 2008 Education Laws
- 2008 Major Public Acts
- 2008 Laws Affecting Veterans
- 2008 Laws Affecting Businesses
- 2008 Laws Affecting Environment



Henry Genga
State Representative - East Hartford



Dear Friends,

Given the declining state tax revenue caused by a weakening economy and lower earnings on Wall Street, we took the prudent measure of sticking to the FY 2008/2009 budget already approved with bi-partisan support. This budget provides a 4% increase (\$814 million) over the current year with no tax increases. Municipal aid increased by \$131.5 million over last fiscal year and Medicaid rates increased by more than \$120 million. East Hartford will see a \$1.8 million increase in its Educational Cost Sharing grant for a total of \$41.7 million.

This budget is not without its shortfalls. I am disappointed that we were not able to provide an increase in nursing home funding or provide our valuable non-profit providers with a much needed increase. Unfortunately, this budget lacks the \$700,000 in funding for East Hartford's Early Reading Success program which is very important for children to improve their reading competency.

This newsletter includes only highlights of the 2008 legislative session; please call me if you need any additional information.

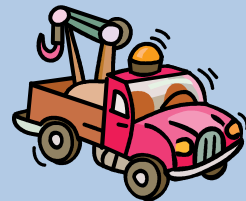
I value the trust you have placed in me to represent you in Hartford and I am honored to represent East Hartford and the 10th District.

Sincerely,

Henry



Capitol Briefs



Motor Vehicle Repairs – Automobile repair shops must post a notice informing customers they have the right to choose any licensed repair shop to repair accident damage to their vehicle. Insurance companies are prohibited from requiring that a person use a specific repair shop unless the consumer agrees. (PA 08-146)

Voting Age – Voters will be asked in November to amend the state Constitution to allow 17-year-olds to vote in a primary as long as they will turn 18 before the general election. (HJR 21)

Minors in the Workplace - Legislation passed this year will allow 15-year-olds to work during school vacation and on Saturdays. Many youngsters are employed as baggers, cashiers, or stock clerks in grocery and other retail businesses learning valuable skills such as job responsibility and accountability. (PA 08-108)

“Gold Star Family Plates” Fee Waiver – We eliminated the standard \$10 fee for Gold Star family plates. The Gold Star is the symbol that the Department of Defense authorized to signify that a family lost a family member in wartime military service to honor our fallen heroes in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as those in past wars. (PA 08-104)



Toxic Toys – To make sure dangerous toys do not get into our children’s hands, we acted to regulate the amount of lead in children’s products and to require a warning label on products that contain lead paint. We also prohibit the sale of items to children under 16 that contain asbestos. (PA 08-106)



Mark Your Calendar Now - This year’s sales tax-free week for back to school shopping will run from Sunday, August 17th through Saturday, August 23rd. It applies to clothing and footwear under \$300.

Mortgage Relief



With the number of foreclosures on the rise in Connecticut, we acted to keep families in their homes. Legislation enacted this year offers assistance to these families through the creation of new (HERO and Mortgage Crisis Job Training), and the enhancement of existing (CT Families and EMAP) state programs for mortgage and foreclosure

help. Also included in this initiative is the new foreclosure mediation program that the courts will use to determine if and how families can keep making mortgage payments and avoid foreclosure. The bill creates stricter regulations and greater penalties on lenders and brokers when writing loans for people with limited income and who carry higher debt. The agencies to contact regarding these programs are The Department of Banking’s Foreclosure Assistance Hotline at 877-472-8313 or the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority at 860-571-3500.

Global Warming

During this session the General Assembly passed landmark global warming legislation. This initiative mandates reductions in state greenhouse gas emissions to 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent below 2001 levels by 2050. This bill would place Connecticut among the leaders in fighting climate change.



It also requires certain state agencies to identify activities and facility improvements to meet state energy saving goals and enact policies and regulations to help meet emission limits. It also requires the DEP commissioner, with the help of a regional nonprofit air quality and climate organization, to publish a baseline inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and recommend strategies, regulatory actions, and policies to help us meet our goals.

Public Safety



Building on legislation that passed in special session which created a new crime of home invasion, increased penalties for burglary of dwelling, increased time for burglary conviction and made the Board of Pardons a permanent body, we took on the challenge of persistent offenders.

We provided \$10 million for prosecutors, state police, GPS tracking, alternative housing, public defenders and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. We also made prosecutors who do not seek persistent dangerous felony status to state for the record why they didn’t do so. Persistent dangerous felons will have their sentences doubled and tripled for minimum and maximum felonies and sentences can go up to life in prison.

Autism Awareness

Parents of children with autism often have difficulty getting insurers and school districts to provide the therapies their children need.

Under legislation approved this year, and effective January 1, 2009, health insurance policies must cover physical, speech and occupational therapy for treatment of autism spectrum disorders to the same extent it covers the services for other conditions. Due to federal law this requirement does not apply to self-insure plans.

We also expanded coordinated services and support, including case management, for adults with autism spectrum disorders who were otherwise not eligible for Department of Developmental Services’ assistance.

The Commissioners of Education and Developmental Services, along with the Chancellor of the Connecticut State University System, will work to define a statewide plan to incorporate methods of teaching children with autism and developmental disabilities into programs, requirements, and training.

This will improve education training to teachers and paraprofessionals through recommendations that incorporate effective teaching methods into teacher preparation and professional development.

Money Follows the Person

In our effort to move people out of nursing homes or other institutional settings into less restrictive, community based settings we expanded the Money Follows the Person program from 700 to 5,000 people. This program assists Connecticut in our efforts to reduce reliance on institutional settings and supports those who want their loved ones in their community. This program not only saves money for the state but is a quality of life issue for many people.

Human Services

Small Nursing Home Pilot Program – The Department of Social Services (DSS) will develop a pilot program of 10 small house nursing homes in the state. Our hope is to improve the quality of life for nursing home residents and provide nursing home care in a home-like setting rather than an institutional environment.



Hospice Benefit - Beginning January 1, 2009 DSS will provide Medicaid clients with a full range of hospice services.