

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Henry Genga

STATE BUDGET

When the session began in January, the state faced a \$140 million deficit. It was clear that tough decisions and financial discipline were needed to close that gap and balance the budget.

I'm proud that we were able to do just that -- passing a new biennial budget that does not raise income or sales taxes, but maintains the state's investments in smart growth and education.

The budget also:

- Restores the sales tax exemption for clothing and shoes in Fiscal Year 2015
- Eliminates standard offer energy auction
- Invests in increasing the size of faculty at all of the state colleges and universities
- Continues our investment in education by funding new Common Core Standards

Additionally, East Hartford will see an increase in state funding over the next two years.

COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY STRATEGY

Connecticut has enacted a new Comprehensive Energy Strategy (CES), which is our path to cheaper, cleaner and more reliable energy. Consumers will have a diversity of fuels to use to heat and cool their homes and businesses, and more access to products and programs to reduce their energy use. The CES expands access to natural gas, promotes energy efficiency and lowers energy costs for consumers. These initiatives provide significant savings to ratepayers and allow our businesses to be competitive.

Plus, the legislation responds to the issues we've faced during recent weather events, which have at times shut down our state, by promoting more tree trimming to provide protection for our power lines.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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CAPITOL UPDATE 2013

Dear Neighbor:

This year's legislative session was both challenging and rewarding. I am incredibly proud to state that through my efforts East Hartford will receive more money in the next two years for education and general town government.

I am also very happy to announce that the state will provide the necessary funding for the creation of a new Student Based Health Center at Hockanum Elementary School. Similar health centers have been established at other schools in East Hartford, and this new center now will provide affordable health care to children in need who attend Hockanum.

This newsletter features brief summaries of some new laws that will affect our community and our state. It is my sincere belief that through teamwork and cooperation we can improve the lives of everyone in Connecticut. To do that, I need to continue to hear from you.

Your input is invaluable to me as I serve as your voice in Hartford. Every phone call or email from you helps me in making the right decisions on your behalf. I can be reached by phone: 860-240-8500, or by email: Henry.Genga@cga.ct.gov. You can also sign up for email updates by visiting www.housedems.ct.gov/Genga.

It is an honor to be your state representative and I look forward to continuing to serve you and our state.

Sincerely,

Henry Genga



CAPITOL UPDATE 2013

BLUE ALERTS

A bill I introduced was passed that establishes a system to alert the public when a law enforcement agent has been seriously injured, killed or is missing, and there is an imminent threat to the public. The other purpose of the bill, which was signed into law, is to solicit the public's assistance in apprehending the suspect or locating the officer. This is similar to the systems already in place for missing children or the elderly.

POOL SAFETY

The law that is effective now establishes and phases in statewide safety standards for all public school swimming pools. It is now required that a "qualified educator," "qualified swimming coach" or "qualified lifeguard" be present, in addition to the individual who is instructing the group. The qualified individual's sole responsibility will be to observe the safety of participants in a qualified pool activity.

Extracurricular activities will require that there is a qualified lifeguard present to observe safety. Physical education classes will require that a physical education teacher and at least another qualified educator, swimming coach or lifeguard be present.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Childhood obesity is an issue not only throughout the country, but in Connecticut as well. The Department of Public Health has found that approximately one-third of Connecticut children in kindergarten and third grade are overweight or obese, and approximately one out of every seven children is obese. This session the legislature passed a law creating a childhood obesity task force in order to study the effects of obesity on children's health. The law also requires that schools provide elementary school students with at least 20 minutes of physical exercise in each regular school day.



"Blue Alert" bill signing with Officer Jeff Rodick, Gov. Malloy and Deputy Chief Vibberts

MAKING MANUFACTURING ASSISTANCE ACT FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR THE SMALL BUSINESS EXPRESS PROGRAM

This legislation creates jobs by helping small businesses in the state through the Small Business Express program implemented in the special session of June 2012. It adds money to the Small Business Express program that provides loans and matching grants to businesses with 100 or fewer employees. Funds were moved from the Manufacturing Assistance Act program into the Small Business Express account so that more funds will be available for this very successful program that has helped many small businesses in the state to create jobs.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

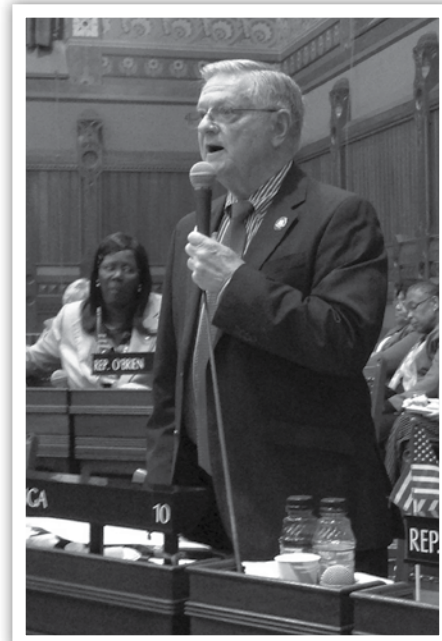
This law seeks to prevent students from being improperly assigned to special education classes when they are actually in need of extra help in learning the English language. If the State Department of Education has ruled that a school district has misidentified a disproportionate number of students, that district's Board of Education will have to submit a report to the Department containing a plan that reduces such misidentifications for students who are in kindergarten through grade three. The law also requires the State Department of Education to study these plans to see what improvements can be made to teacher training.

GENETICALLY-ENGINEERED FOOD (GMOs)

Connecticut became the first state in the nation to pass a genetically modified organisms labeling law. I was proud to work on the bill that will require foods to be labeled under certain circumstances if they contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Consumers have the right to know what is in the food that they are buying. Now they will know whether or not their foods contain GMOs and will be empowered to make individual and informed decisions about whether or not to purchase them for their families.

CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM

In our current economic climate, parents working full-time are required to put their children in day care. The Care 4 Kids program helps low- to moderate-income families in Connecticut pay for child care costs. This session we passed a law that expands the Care 4 Kids program to include those parents who are on maternity leave. This law requires the Department of Social Services to grant up to six weeks of continued eligibility for Care 4 Kids funding to mothers on maternity leave who take unpaid leave from their jobs, securing their current child's spot in the program, even when they are unable to work.



Rep. Genga speaking on a bill on the House Floor.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Recent events have shown us even more acutely the importance of providing affordable accessible mental health services to those suffering from a mental illness and disease, especially our children. This session we passed a law that requires the Commissioner of DCF, in consultation with several related groups, to develop an implementation plan across agency and policy areas that meet the mental, emotional and behavioral health needs of all children in the state. This law also establishes a Children's Mental Health Task Force to study all aspects of mental health.

GUN LAWS AND MENTAL HEALTH

This session the House and Senate passed a law that works in tandem with the gun violence, mental health and school safety bill we had passed earlier in the session. SB 972 strengthens the system we have in place here in Connecticut relating to children's mental health. Pediatricians will get more training about signs of mental health, seeking to reduce mental, emotional and behavioral health issues in children through more early identification and intervention.

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