

STATE REPRESENTATIVE & DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

# LINDA M. GENTILE

PROUDLY SERVING THE 104TH HOUSE DISTRICT  
ANSONIA AND DERBY

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

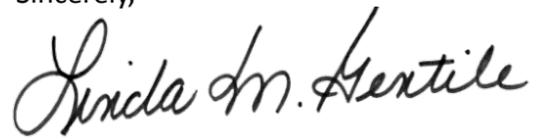
Thank you for your continued support. It has been my honor to represent you in the General Assembly for another term. There were many intensely debated issues this legislative session and it was a privilege to represent the people of Ansonia and Derby during each of those discussions.

Connecticut's economy continues to recover and looking back at the 2015 legislative session, I am proud of the steps the legislature took to grow our state's economy. We supported the successful Small Business Express Program and made historic investments in transforming our state's transportation system.

We continued improving our education system by providing additional aid to English Language Learners and students with learning disabilities like dyslexia. We also took significant steps to lower the cost of higher education by becoming the first state in the country to establish a Student Loan Bill of Rights.

I hope you find the enclosed information helpful. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



STATE REPRESENTATIVE & DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

# LINDA M. GENTILE

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## CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

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*Rep. Gentile attending bill signing with fellow colleagues of the state legislature.*



*Rep. Gentile screens upcoming legislation during session.*

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## ASSISTING SMALL BUSINESS

We allocated more funds for the highly successful Small Business Express Program. We are also requiring the Department of Economic and Community Development to dedicate funds to develop a program for construction projects for minority business enterprises. These moves will create jobs and better economic opportunities for Connecticut families.

## CONSUMERS

### VARIABLE ELECTRIC RATES

Connecticut became the first state to protect residents from electricity providers who offer a low introductory rate that increases rapidly. The protections require competitive electric suppliers to give their customers a 60-day notice before the end of their contract. Suppliers cannot charge customers a termination or early cancellation fee and must allow customers to switch providers within 72 hours.

### BIRTH-TO-THREE PROGRAMS

Beginning this year, hearing tests will now be included in the Birth-to-Three program. This program offers parents and guardians a variety of tools to ensure their toddlers are properly screened and cared for if they are found to have a disability during this essential developmental period. Early detection of a disability helps parents and guardians make use of early intervention services for their infant or toddler.

### STUDENT LOANS

In A historic step increasing college affordability, the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) announced it will offer a fixed interest rate of 4.95% for new student loans, down from its current rate of 6.75%. Not only is this the lowest rate that CHESLA has ever offered, it is also significantly lower than the new Federal PLUS loan rate of 6.84%.



*Rep. Gentile considers legislation that is being proposed.*



*Rep. Gentile as deputy speaker is joined by Speaker Sharkey and Attorney Frankel.*

## SENIORS

### PROTECTING THE ELDERLY

In situations where abuse or neglect is suspected, the Department of Social Services can now petition a probate court to gain access to that person's home to make an assessment. The definition of neglect has been expanded to include elderly people who do not live alone, but whose caretaker fails to arrange for the necessary services to keep an elderly person healthy.

### BETTER LABELING ON PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES

To better protect and inform consumers, we are now requiring pharmacists to include with generic drugs the manufacturer's name, the website and telephone number for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's drug safety and reporting program (MedWatch). If the patient is being given a generic drug, the pharmacist must include the brand name on the label.

## VETERANS

### AGRICULTURE PROGRAM FOR OUR VETERANS

An increasing number of military veterans have been returning to the state. It is one of our top priorities to ensure that upon their return they have educational and vocational opportunities. The Veterans to Agriculture Program gives a tax credit to veterans who have a gross income from agricultural production of over \$2,500. The program will be facilitated and promoted by the Department of Agriculture and the University of Connecticut and will provide educational and training opportunities.

### LAUNCHING OF THE WOMEN IN THE VETERANS PROGRAM

The legislature recognizes the important sacrifices that veterans have made. We established the Women Veterans Program to help connect female veterans to services. We created the Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council to help incarcerated vets assimilate back into their community.

## REDUCING REQUIRED TESTING IN SCHOOLS

Since the rollout of No Child Left Behind almost 15 years ago, standardized testing has come under a lot of scrutiny. One area of concern is there are simply too many tests. For example, juniors in high school are currently required to take the SBAC exam at a time when many of them are taking the SAT or ACT college admission tests.

As we work statewide and across the country to improve the use of standardized tests, the legislature took another big step forward this year by allowing schools to waive SBAC testing for any students taking these college admissions tests.

## SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT IN SCHOOLS

A new law restricts the use of restraints and seclusion in school settings, which predominantly applied to special education students and most public school students in grades kindergarten through 12.

It prohibits teachers, administrators, and other public school employees from using life-threatening physical restraints on any student, limits how long students may be kept in allowable physical restraints or seclusion, and specifies the types of locations in which a student may be secluded. The law also bars school employees from using physical restraints on students or placing students in seclusion, unless the employees have been properly trained in their respective school board's policies and procedures. It requires school boards to notify parents and guardians no later than 24 hours after a child has been placed in physical restraints or seclusion and follow certain protocols with students placed in physical restraints or seclusion four or more times in 20 school days.

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