

A Healthier Connecticut

HealthFirst CT and Healthy Kids Initiatives

I am happy that we were able to make several improvements to our current health care system. As I promised last year, we expanded access to quality and affordable health care. These improvements include:

- ✓ Expansion of HUSKY (Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth) to give access to 10,000 more residents.
- ✓ Establishing a broad outreach program to reach all eligible participants.
- ✓ Expansion of HUSKY A coverage for pregnant women and requiring automatic enrollment of uninsured newborns.
- ✓ Rate increases under Medicaid, allowing health care providers to serve more patients.
- ✓ Additional funding for the School-Based Health Clinics to provide transportation and increased access.
- ✓ A state commitment to public health data collection and an online license renewal system which will allow health care professionals to expedite the renewal process. **(Public Act 07-185)**



Protecting our Children

- ✓ A ban on the application of lawn care pesticides on school playing fields and playgrounds will now include middle schools. Previously the ban had only protected elementary schools. **(Public Act 07-168)**
- ✓ In an effort to fight the trend of underage smoking, the legislature doubled the penalty for minors who purchase tobacco products. Dealers and distributors will also see higher fines for selling to minors. **(Public Act 07-175)**
- ✓ In response to the concern for safety and security in Connecticut's public schools, the legislature created the Security Assistance For Education (S.A.F.E.) Program to help schools assess their security, provide security infrastructure improvements, and ensure that school personnel receive appropriate training. **(Public Act 07-208)**

Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning

I was pleased that we were able to pass childhood lead poisoning legislation which creates a \$1 million program that will make lead screening mandatory for all Connecticut children up to age 3. Lead exposure is considered the most common environmental hazard for children, and less than half of Connecticut children under age 2 are currently screened for traces of lead. Beginning January 1, 2009, all primary care physicians will be required to test 1- and 2-year-old children for lead poisoning. A simple finger prick will detect lead traces. **(Public Act 07-2)**

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**Bob
Godfrey**



Capitol News 2007

Dear Neighbor:

I'm sad that we were not able to override the Governor's veto of your tax cuts. But while the budget and tax package is only second best, I was able to get a hefty increase in state aid (almost \$4,000,000!) that, I hope, will be used to keep our local property taxes from increasing. I also saved your income tax deduction of \$500 against the property tax.

I'm also very pleased that we dealt with many issues that you have told me are important to you. Keep those letters, e-mails, and phone calls coming. They really do help me as I make the many decisions you have entrusted to my judgment. You and I make a great team!

I'm reporting the highlights of a number of those very issues in this newsletter. You'll also be getting separate reports on the environment and energy, as well as a survey later this year.

Thank you for the privilege of serving you!

Bringing Your State Tax Dollars Home

Grants 07-08	FY 07-08
PILOT: State Owned Property	\$1,847,891
PILOT: Colleges & Hospitals	\$1,186,174
Town Aid Roads	\$417,258
Local Capital Improvement Program	\$550,266
Pequot/Mohegan Aid	\$1,511,080
Adult Education	\$180,462
School Transportation	\$1,060,913
Educational Cost Sharing	\$21,895,072
Total State Aid	\$28,649,116
Grant Total from FY 06-07	\$24,688,572
Difference (Increase) of	\$3,960,544

Food Stamp Eligibility

This legislation allows individuals to receive food stamp benefits despite owning a motor vehicle. The bill permits the Department of Social Services (DSS) to exclude all of a household's motor vehicles from being counted as assets in determining the household's eligibility for the food stamp program. The commissioner of DSS can use alternative motor vehicle evaluation provisions established in federal regulations when determining food stamp eligibility. Currently, any Connecticut household applying for food stamps can only exclude one motor vehicle worth up to \$9,500 from being counted as an asset. **(Public Act 07-63)**



Keeping Our Promise to Teachers - and You

I am particularly happy to report that we have addressed the serious underfunding of the Teachers' Retirement Fund. The legislature authorized 30-year general obligation bonds to fund \$2 billion of the unfunded liability. While the bonds are outstanding, there will be automatic appropriations of the actuarially required annual state contributions - \$300 million of our surplus which will be used to fund this obligation for the next two fiscal years. Since the interest on the bonds will be payable at the current interest rate of approximately 5.6%, instead of the 8.5% we are paying on the unfunded liability, a considerable savings will be achieved. **(Public Act 07-186)**



Bob leading a tour of the State Capitol with students and teachers from St. Peter's School in Danbury



"As the second longest serving member of the Judiciary Committee, I make your safety my top priority."

Highlights from the Judiciary Committee



Getting Guns Off Our Streets

I've been advocating responsible gun bills for you for so long that I've been introduced as the 'grandfather' of Connecticut's sane gun laws. I added one more this year. A recent national stolen fire arms study found that 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 theft 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. **(Public Act 07-163)**

Megan's Law

Under this legislation, sexual predators are required to register e-mails, instant message addresses, and other internet communication identifiers. If they fail to do so, or use an unregistered e-mail address, the penalty is returning to prison. The bill establishes a legal mechanism for online communities, such as MySpace, to communicate with Connecticut law enforcement when sex offenders are using their site. Additionally, the legislation requires computer repairmen to now report to authorities any discovery of pictures of children being abused during the repair visit. Most importantly, the bill increases the penalties for sex offenders by requiring mandatory minimum sentences for certain offenses, and makes it easier for a child to submit testimony against an accused sex offender. **(Public Act 07-4)**

Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

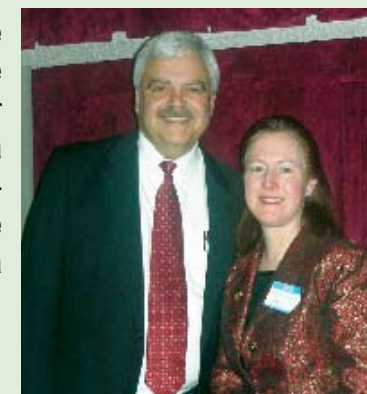
Connecticut was one of only three states that treated 16- and 17-year-olds as an adult for criminal matters. This session, changes were made to place these young people under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. However, those juveniles who commit the most serious of crimes will continue to be referred to the adult system. In the juvenile system, the focus will be on rehabilitation instead of punishment. **(Public Act 07-4)**

Jessica's Law

The General Assembly unanimously passed legislation designed to give prosecutors and police the tools necessary to expand sentencing of child sex predators. This legislation will create a new crime of "aggravated sexual assault of a minor" for adults who commit a sex offense against a child under the age of 13, with a mandatory minimum prison term of 25 years for a first offense and 50 years for a second offense. Crimes of kidnapping, stalking, or injuring a victim would adhere to the established sentencing. In addition, the legislation also sets a new mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years for anyone who possesses or imports child pornography, has sexual contact with a child under age 13, or entices a minor into sexual contact through the use of a computer or internet. **(Public Act 07-143)**

Care For Sexual Assault Victims

The General Assembly passed a law to ensure that all women who are victims of sexual assault get the highest standard of care from every licensed Connecticut health care facility providing emergency treatment to female sexual assault victims. Under the law, every medical facility must provide a victim with accurate objective information about emergency contraception; inform her of emergency contraception's availability, use, and efficiency; and give her emergency contraception on request, unless she is pregnant as determined by an approved pregnancy test. If a medical facility chooses not to provide emergency contraception to rape victims directly, the facility may contract with an independent provider to comply with these care requirements. **(Public Act 07-24)**



Bob and Probate Judge Dianne Yamin at a celebration honoring the Regional Children's Probate Court for winning CSG's National Innovations Award. The award recognizes a state program that uses a unique approach to solving a complex social issue.

Summer Energy Savings Opportunities

I am proud that the General Assembly passed energy legislation designed to assist you with rising energy bills. This bill strikes a balance between government oversight of energy production and private generation, while creating alternative choices for those who desire to have more control over their monthly energy bill. Our goal is energy conservation and price stability. Highlights for consumers include:



Bob and House Majority Leader Chris Donovan on the House floor

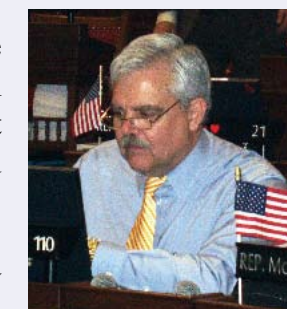
- **Summer Saver Rewards.** Real and immediate relief from rising energy bills for you! The more you conserve in July, August, and September (compared to 12 months earlier), the more you can save on your bill. If you use 10% less electricity, you will save an extra 10% in addition to what you have already saved through conservation. For more information, and to sign up for the program, call **1-877-WISE USE.**

- **Sales Tax Exemptions.** You'll pay **no** sales tax on all Energy Star appliances through September 30th. There is an exemption for the energy saving Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs, and for vehicles with a city or highway fuel efficiency of at least 40 miles per gallon.

- **Rebates.** The law provides rebates for the replacement of old heating and air conditioning units (purchased after July 1, 2007) with units that meet the Energy Star standards. **(Public Act 07-242)**

Eminent Domain

Finally, the third year after the Supreme Court decision on the Kelo case, the Connecticut General Assembly addressed eminent domain.



Bob preparing legislation in the House Chamber

The legislation does some very good things; for instance, a town cannot take a property by eminent domain just to increase local taxes. The city council has to approve any taking by a two-thirds vote, owners must be compensated at 125% of the appraised value, and owners can ask the Superior Court to enjoin the taking if proper procedures are not followed. **(Public Act 07-141)**