



STATE BUDGET MEANS INCREASED FUNDS FOR 29TH DISTRICT

I am pleased to report that the state budget for the fiscal year that began July 1, 2007 includes significant increases in statutory grants to the three towns that make up the 29th Assembly District. These grants total nearly \$23,000,000, an increase of more than \$4,750,000 over the amounts received in the past fiscal year. These funds will have a positive impact on the efforts of Rocky Hill, Wethersfield, and Newington to meet their obligations in fields that include education, road maintenance, and a variety of services for seniors, children, and those with special needs – services that are vital to the health, safety, and well-being of all our citizens.

ROCKY HILL

	FY 2007-08 Funding	Increase From FY 2006-07
ECS	\$3,213,926	\$968,480
Public School Transp.	138,712	33,708
PILOT—State Property	622,159	26,272
Mashantucket/Mohegan	447,871	12,600
TOTAL: All Statutory Grants	4,723,399	1,053,823

WETHERSFIELD

ECS	\$7,680,711	\$2,072,581
Public School Transp.	248,477	53,569
PILOT—State Prop.	232,426	5,287
Mashantucket/Mohegan	348,241	9,797
TOTAL: All Statutory Grants	8,977,313	2,173,597

NEWINGTON

ECS	\$12,100,397	\$1,713,504
Public School Transp.	357,361	(2,624)
PILOT—State Prop.	768,606	(44,866)
Mashantucket/Mohegan	309,897	70,166
TOTAL: All Statutory Grants	14,727,328	1,972,272

2007 Legislative Report



How
to
Contact
Me

In the District:
194 Catherine Drive
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
513-1406
E-mail: Tony.Guerrera@aol.com

At the Capitol:
Legislative Office Building
Room 2031
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
1-800-842-8267 or (860) 240-8500

Representative Tony Guerrero

Legislative Office Building, Room 2301
Hartford, CT 06106

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State Representative
TONY GUERRERA

Serving Rocky Hill, Newington, Wethersfield



Dear Friend:

The 2007 session of the General Assembly helped build a strong foundation for Connecticut's future, using property tax relief, increased funding for education and health care, energy reforms, support for job-creating economic development, and strengthened public safety as the building blocks.

In addition, the legislature committed necessary funds to protect pensions of retired teachers, continue paying down state debt, and put millions away for future rainy days.

You will find in this newsletter a summary of much of the important legislation we approved. If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me, and I'll respond as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Tony Guerrero
State Representative
29th Assembly District

A MAJOR CHANGE IN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

Connecticut's Presidential Preference Primary is moving from the first Tuesday in March to the first Tuesday in February, beginning next year. The change will put Connecticut in step with 40 other states, including the majority of New England states, that are getting an earlier start on choosing candidates for the Presidential election.



OUR COMMITMENT TO EXPAND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY



The State of Connecticut this year made an unprecedented commitment to expanded educational opportunity for all its students in grades kindergarten

through 12. The keystone of this commitment was the addition of nearly \$182 million in the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant to cities and towns, up to a total of \$1.81 billion for the fiscal year that began July 1, 2007. Just as important, the General Assembly approved an increase in the ECS foundation from \$5,891 to \$9,687 per student.

In addition to increased ECS funding, additional dollars were provided for many vital educational programs and services.

The totals in these areas include:

- \$10.2 million for school readiness programs;
- \$9.2 million for magnet schools;
- \$4.4 million for OPEN Choice programs;
- \$3.3 million for charter schools;
- \$2.2 million for after-school programs.
- \$2.2 million for head start/early childhood links;
- \$2 million for support of vocational agriculture programs.

These commitments are evidence of the General Assembly's determination to provide our young people with the highest-quality instruction to help prepare them for higher education and the ability to be successful in an increasingly competitive national and international workplace.

NEW AND EXPANDED ENERGY INITIATIVES

The General Assembly approved a number of bills that provide new and expanded programs and initiatives aimed at controlling energy costs for all the state's citizens.

• New legislation allows municipalities to create Energy Improvement Districts that could create their own power to support local government and businesses by developing and operating their own small generating plants that would be controlled by local Energy Improvement District Boards. Revenue bonds will be available to public and private investors; the Districts will be exempt from local taxes; and the Boards will be exempt from local and state taxes.

- The budget includes \$85 million, which will be used for the Energy Conservation Fund and the Clean Energy Fund.
- Connecticut Innovations, Inc., will provide \$50 million in grants to municipalities for renewable energy sources and cogeneration facilities.
- A \$50 million grant program will fund small-scale generation projects in businesses and state buildings powered by solar energy, fuel cells, and other forms of renewable energy.



COMMITTEES REVIEW CONSTRUCTION FAILURES ON I-84



House Chairman of the General Assembly's Transportation Committee, State Representative Tony Guerrero (left), confers with Representative Steve Mikutel (D-45th District), House Vice Chairman of the committee, during oversight hearings on I-84 construction failures.

The legislature's Transportation and Public Safety Committees held two days of oversight hearings in July to determine what went wrong on the major construction project to upgrade I-84 in the Waterbury and Cheshire areas. The companies involved in the project reportedly were responsible for, among other things, installing a drainage system that does not work properly, insufficiently anchored guardrails, poorly welded light poles, incorrectly built bridges, and substandard concrete median barriers. The committees plan to review the testimony and documents that have been submitted to the lawmakers and use the review as the basis for possible legislative proposals to be placed before the 2008 session of the General Assembly. The committees also indicated support for legislative enactment of a "clean contracting" bill and adequate Department of Transportation staffing to provide essential state oversight of transportation projects.

INCREASED HEALTH CARE A LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

The General Assembly allocated a nearly \$184 million increase to upgrade health care for all our citizens, fulfilling a pledge made by the majority leadership prior to the beginning of the 2007 session.



Almost half the increase, more than \$94 million, was directed to increasing Medicaid reimbursements to health care providers and institutions throughout the state, an area that had been restricted in previous years by tight revenues. Included in the total was \$30 million from the state's Fiscal Year 2007 surplus as a first step in essential assistance to distressed hospitals around the state. Among the other significant increases in health care were:

- \$20 million to increase managed care dental rates;
- \$7.7 million for a cost-of-living increase in home care services;
- \$2.5 million for school-based health clinics;
- \$2.5 million for community health centers;
- \$1.4 million for asthma management programs;
- \$1.3 million to treat children's behavioral health problems;
- \$1 million for healthy lifestyle initiatives and childhood obesity prevention.

In addition to these programs, the General Assembly approved a \$39 million cost-of-living increase for private providers which offer valuable services to supplement state programs in such areas as mental health, mental retardation, children and families, social services, and public health.

- \$49 million to expand Connecticut's innovative HUSKY program;

HOLLYWOOD EAST CONTINUES TO GROW



The General Assembly expanded legislation, approved last year, that created a 30 percent tax credit for film productions done within the state. New legislation adds other media including sound recordings, music videos, digital media productions, interactive web sites, and video games to the list of projects now able to apply for similar tax credits. The legislation also offers tax-credit packages to media businesses that come to Connecticut to build infrastructure in the state and to leased and purchased properties used solely for media production. In addition, five state agencies will combine their resources to develop a trained media workforce, including an unpaid intern training program for high school and college students, a production assistant training program, and an on-set training and mentoring program.

PROTECTING OUR SCHOOL CHILDREN

As House Chairman of the Transportation Committee, I was shocked to learn that an unqualified school bus driver had been involved in a fatal traffic accident. As a result, the committee moved quickly to draft a bill strengthening control over those responsible for transporting school children. The legislation requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to notify public transportation providers

about any driver whose commercial license or passenger endorsement has been suspended, withdrawn, or revoked, and requires expanded drug testing, with automatic disqualification for those who test positive. The legislation also bars the department from issuing temporary licenses.



HOMEOWNERS' RIGHTS STRENGTHENED IN EMINENT DOMAIN PROCEEDINGS

The General Assembly reformed eminent domain this year by tightening the rules for taking property for redevelopment. All redevelopment plans now must receive a public hearing, and must be approved by a municipality's legislative body by a two-thirds vote. Approved plans will be subject to a ten-year deadline and, if a plan is not completed in time, any takings must go through the approval process again. Property owners will be able to ap-

peal proposed takings to court, and courts will be able to prohibit takings if statutory procedures are not followed. If properties are not used as a part of a plan, or if the timetable for a plan expires, a property's former owner will be given the first opportunity to buy back the property. Finally, the bill provides that homeowners be compensated 125% of their property's fair market value as determined by an average of two independent appraisers.