



The “MOVE OVER” law, co-sponsored by Representative Guerrero, became effective October 1st. The new law requires a motorist approaching stopped emergency vehicles on or alongside a three-plus-lane highway to slow and move over one lane. Violators could be fined up to \$2,500 or, if injury or death of an emergency vehicle operator results, up to \$10,000.

CHILDREN

Extending its commitment to the quality education and responsible protection of Connecticut’s children, the General Assembly approved a number of important bills.

One measure is designed to expand the pool of qualified teachers available to replace retirees and those moving on to other professions. It creates waivers from the state’s teacher testing requirements to open the door to teachers from other states or those whose qualifications do not coincide with Connecticut’s existing teacher training requirements. This measure also allows boards of education to establish cooperative arrangements for special education and health-care services.

Following a shooting-range tragedy that took the life of a Connecticut youngster, the legislature approved a bill that bars anyone from selling, giving, or transferring machine guns to minors under age 16, including allowing minors to use machine guns for target shooting. Maximum penalties for violations are a \$1,000 fine and 10 years in prison.

Another bill is aimed at protecting children from a chemical suspected of being harmful to child development as well as adult reproductive systems. The measure bans the sale, manufacture, and distribution of infant formula and baby food stored in plastic containers made with the chemical, bisphenol-A.

Further protection for children is found in legislation affecting the use of pesticides at child day-care centers. The bill sets new conditions on when pesticides can be applied at day-care centers and establishes a system for notifying parents and guardians who have asked for such notification when pesticides are being applied.

To protect students and guests from cardiac arrests at school functions, school boards are now required, if funding is available, to have an automatic external defibrillator at each school in their jurisdiction and school staff trained in their use and in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Finally, new legislation requires that stepchildren receive the same insurance coverage as biological children.

2009 Legislative Report

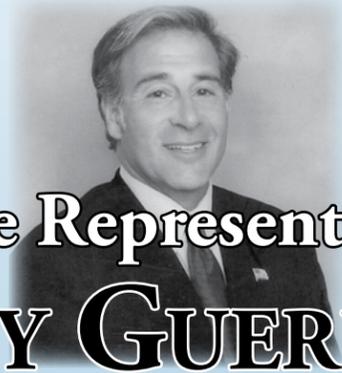


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State Representative
TONY GUERRERA
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Dear Friend:

This was the toughest year I’ve spent in Connecticut’s Legislature. From day one, my colleagues and I were confronted with the worst recession in decades and a crumbling financial system that, together, left our state with an \$8.5 billion hole to fill in the budget.

We had to fill that hole with spending cuts that would not cripple state programs and services and tax changes that would not add to the already crushing burden on taxpayers. We finally passed a budget that almost no one is happy with, but the spending cuts should help us stop the bleeding, and the tax changes should get us past the worst of our financial crisis.



To help Connecticut create jobs, we saved Workforce Investment, Youth Employment, and the Small Business Incubator program. To continue the state’s commitment to quality education, we maintained funding levels for Educational Cost Sharing and support for Priority, Magnet, Charter Schools, and Head Start. To maintain vital health and human services, we continued budgeting for Life Star, Dial-A-Ride, community and school-based health centers, home and long-term care, nursing homes, ConnPACE, Medicaid, and HUSKY.

In addition, the General Assembly adopted legislation to control health care costs, attack the mortgage crisis, and protect children, seniors, and veterans. We did the best we could to minimize the recession’s impact on municipalities. This newsletter summarizes many of these initiatives. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me, and I’ll respond as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Antonio “Tony” Guerrero
State Representative – 29th Assembly District

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

The General Assembly approved three important changes in the way in which Connecticut government works for its citizens.

The first bill is designed to reduce the burden on local property taxpayers by promoting regional cooperation, beginning July 1, 2011. This measure allows creation of economic development districts to encourage regional economic development projects and allows for the sharing of real and personal property tax revenue resulting from such new projects.

Another bill consolidates the number

of probate courts to 54. A newly established commission was responsible for designating the boundaries for the new court districts. Further, anyone elected to a probate judgeship on or after January 5, 2011 will have to be a member of the Connecticut bar.

Finally, new legislation requires a special election to fill a vacancy created by the resignation or death of a United States Senator from Connecticut. Exceptions are provided for national emergencies and vacancies occurring during the last 14 months of a Senator's term.



In June, Roberta Yegidis, Chairperson of the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT), presented Transportation Committee Co-chairman Tony Guerrero, with CACT's 2009 Friend of Public Transportation Award. The award, presented at CACT's annual meeting, recognized Representative Guerrero's "outstanding leadership and dedication to the enhancement of public transportation in the State of Connecticut." In part, the award cited Representative Guerrero's "leadership and work to provide adequate funding in FY 10 and FY 11 for public transportation services, including the state matching grants to municipalities for demand transportation for the elderly and persons with disabilities."

PUBLIC SAFETY

Connecticut's lawmakers constantly update state laws to enhance public safety. This year was no exception. New legislation reduces the blood alcohol level for commercial motor vehicles drivers from .08 percent to .04 percent as the basis for determining driving-under-the-influence violations. Another bill expands the so-called Reverse



911 system by allowing municipalities to use the state's enhanced 911 database at no charge. The Reverse 911 system provides a city or town with the ability to call residents with short messages regarding public emergencies.

HEALTH CARE

With attention focused on the national debate over health care, the General Assembly took its own initiatives to meet this challenge.

Legislators approved the SustiNet Plan, an important first step toward offering health insurance to the bulk of the estimated 750,000 Connecticut residents without health insurance at some point during 2007 and 2008. The bill establishes a Board of Directors to develop detailed recommendations to expand affordable health-care coverage to more residents, contain costs, promote preventive care, create multiple coverage pools and benefit options, and implement electronic medical records. The Board's recommendations are to be submitted



VETERANS

Recognizing the challenges faced by many Connecticut families whose members have served gallantly in United States armed forces, the General Assembly adopted three bills providing important assistance.

One measure expands the Family and Medical Leave Act to allow a covered employee to take up to 26 weeks in unpaid leave from work to care for an immediate family member or next of kin who is a current member of the armed forces, reserves, or National Guard and is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise undergoing outpatient treatment, or is on the temporary disability retired list.

A second measure enables veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts to receive transitional behavioral health services.

The third makes immediate relatives of armed forces members, including the National Guard, who are not on active duty, eligible for grants from the state's Military Family Relief Fund to help pay for household goods or services if paying for them is a hardship because of the member's military service.

to the General Assembly within 60 days of the passage of federal health-care legislation.

The General Assembly also took a first step toward controlling the cost of prescription drugs. The legislation created a working group including the State Comptroller and the commissioners of four state agencies and directs them to develop a plan for the bulk purchasing of pharmaceuticals prescribed for state employees and members of several health-care programs operated by the state. The bulk-purchasing plan, to be completed by December 31, 2009, will enable the state to utilize its bargaining power to negotiate lower prices and save taxpayers' dollars.

SENIORS

Faced with a national trend toward an aging population, the General Assembly adopted two important acts.

The first expands provisions of the Connecticut Statewide Respite Care Program that provides short-term relief for family members caring for victims of Alzheimer's or related diseases. One provision increases from \$30,000 to \$41,000 the program's annual income limit and increases its asset limit from \$80,000 to \$109,000. Another requires the Commissioner of Social Services to update both figures annually to reflect Social Security cost-of-living adjustments. A third provision requires the Commissioner to adopt regulations more than doubling the current \$3,500 annual eligibility limit for additional respite-care services.

The second bill creates a Silver Alert system patterned after the Amber Alert program for abducted children. The Silver Alert program creates an emergency notification system for law enforcement agencies to broadcast local, regional, or statewide public alerts for missing seniors and others suffering from such impairments as Alzheimer's.



MORTGAGES

Implementing federal legislation adopted in 2008, Connecticut lawmakers passed an act enabling the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to determine what constitutes a significant reduction in a borrower's income, expands circumstances that constitute a financial hardship beyond a borrower's control, allows borrowers to apply for assistance under certain conditions before they receive notice of intent to foreclose, specifies circumstances under which a lender may proceed to foreclosure, and includes homeowners with fixed-rate mortgages in the CT FAMILIES refinancing program.

The Legislature also strengthened laws to prevent abusive lending practices by creating a crime of residential mortgage fraud. An individual convicted of a single violation could be sentenced to a \$5,000 fine and five years in prison; conviction of a second or subsequent violation could bring up to a \$10,000 fine and up to ten years in prison.



TEEN DRIVING



Representative Guerrero joined in a news conference to promote the state's Teen Driving Prevention Partnership, continuing the leadership he provided as House Chair of the Transportation Committee in winning passage of legislation to strengthen laws improving safety for teenage drivers.

IDENTITY THEFT

The Federal Trade Commission estimates that as many as nine million Americans have their identity stolen every year, and the General Assembly this year adjusted previously approved laws to keep up with constantly changing criminal behavior.

The new legislation, among other things, increases the penalty for criminal impersonation, creates a new crime of unlawful possession of personal access devices, extends the statute of limitations from two to three years to sue for damages resulting from identity theft, specifies that damages will include documented lost wages and other financial losses, makes property obtained through identity theft subject to forfeiture, and penalizes employers for failing to obtain and retain employment applications securely.