

# CAPITOL UPDATE 2012

## Improving Schools and Closing the Achievement Gap

After much spirited debate, the legislature passed an education reform package that supports teachers’ development, increases Pre-K slots, and builds a framework for meaningful intervention in our lowest-achieving schools. The effort includes additional funding for challenged schools that is tied to a specific plan for improvement while continuing our commitment to maintain state support for all school districts.

## Addressing College Affordability

As part of a multi-year effort to address college affordability, I introduced legislation that would have created a tax deduction on our state income tax for student loan interest payments. As college tuition rates increase, students and their families have increasingly turned to student loans and total student loan debt now exceeds \$1 trillion nationally.

## Preventing Sexual Violence on Campus

This law protects students by requiring our state’s colleges and universities to adopt and disclose strong policies to prevent and react to on-campus sexual assault and harassment.



Rep. Haddad being introduced by UConn President Susan Herbst at the opening of UConn’s Veterans’ Oasis

Dear Neighbor:

From jobs to education to improved response to natural disasters, the legislature addressed many critical issues.

It started last October when we passed comprehensive, bipartisan jobs legislation that invested hundreds of millions of dollars in small businesses, gave firms hiring incentives, aligned education programs with jobs-in-demand, encouraged entrepreneurship and innovation, and eliminated red-tape.

This spring, we balanced the budget without raising taxes while keeping our funding promise to cities and towns. Historic changes were made to our educational system to help our students succeed. We demanded that utility companies respond better when storms and crises hit. We repealed a death penalty law that wasn’t working, and further protected women who are victims of domestic violence.

In addition, I worked on several bills this year including making student loan interest tax deductible and creating Social Enterprise Businesses.

I hope this report is informative. I’m happy to answer any questions about these issues or any others facing our state this year. Together we can work to create a better future for our friends and families.

Sincerely,

Gregory Haddad, State Representative



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**Budgeted to Meet CT’s Needs**

A year ago we dealt with a shortfall in excess of \$3 billion – 15% of our total budget. This year, the General Assembly passed a budget bill that keeps appropriations under our state spending cap and continues investments in education and job growth. Despite cuts in many areas, funding to towns was preserved to help stabilize property taxes.



**Repealed Capital Punishment**

Connecticut is the 17th state to eliminate capital punishment, replacing the death penalty with a mandatory sentence of life in prison without possibility of release. The new law is prospective, meaning that it does not apply to those already sentenced to death row.

**Expanding Job Opportunities**

The General Assembly provided new funding for Youth Employment Summer Jobs and adult evening education programs. We also strengthened the Small Business Express program to help small businesses create jobs and funded a Connecticut-Made initiative to promote products from local businesses.

**Improving Hospice Care**

With just two licensed hospices in the state, we acted to expand access to hospice care in our local communities. New state regulations will be aligned with federal Medicare requirements which will allow for more small residential hospices and ensure that residents have access to health care services across the full continuum of care.

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**Enforcing Accountability from Utility Companies**

After last year’s storms, the legislature has passed sweeping reforms to avoid wide-spread and lengthy loss of utility service in the future. Utilities will be held to performance standards for emergency preparation and response. The new law enforces the new standards with penalties of up to 2.5 percent of an electric or gas company’s annual distribution revenue, which could amount to millions of dollars in fines.

**Reformed CT’s Blue Laws**

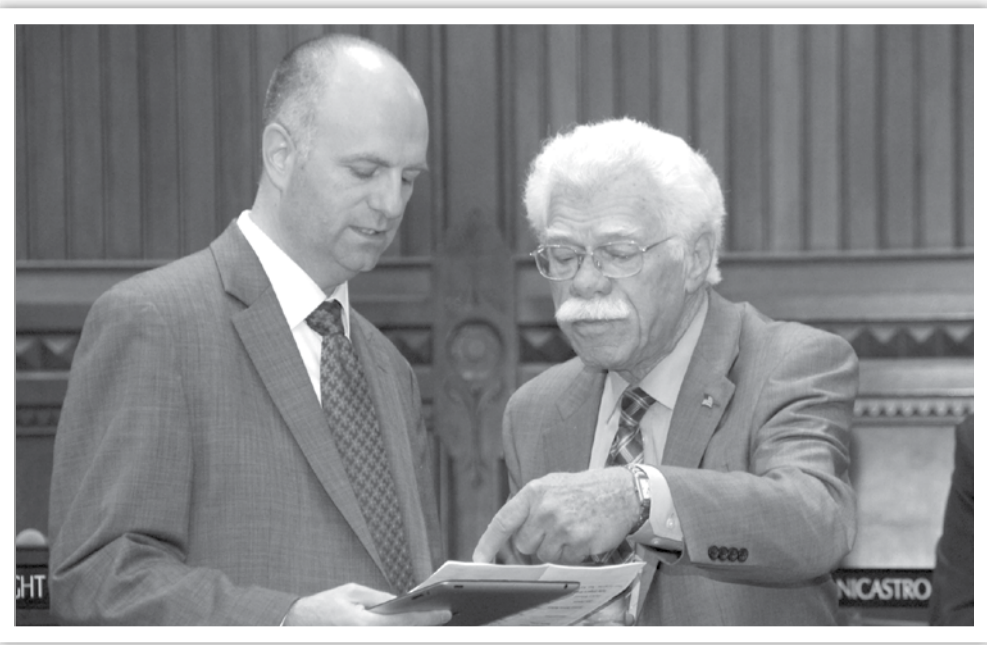
This new law permits package and grocery stores to sell alcohol on Sundays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. The new hours are part of a larger package of reforms that aim to increase consumer choices while still preserving small business package store owners’ ability to compete for sales with larger big box stores.

**Permitted Medical Use of Marijuana**

To give relief to thousands of patients suffering horrible pain and symptoms from diseases including cancer, AIDS and multiple sclerosis, Connecticut become the 17th state to enact a law where doctors can essentially prescribe marijuana which can be obtained through licensed pharmacists approved by the Department of Consumer Protection.

**Strengthened Grandparents’ Rights**

This act eases the judicial requirements and application process for a grandparent seeking to be granted visitation rights through family court. The bill recognizes the often-complicated relationships that sometimes exist with families and seeks to allow visitation when the circumstances will benefit the child.



Rep. Haddad working on legislation on the floor of the House.



Rep. Haddad with the winners of his Essay Challenge at Mansfield Middle School.

**Protected the Environment**

The General Assembly passed bills to reduce the amount of phosphorous used in the state because it degrades the quality of our waters. We also passed an initiative to update and improve our state’s open space plan.

**Cleaning up Brownfields**

The legislature initiated a process to streamline the state’s brownfield remediation and development programs with the goal of swifter conversion of contaminated and long-abandoned industrial properties into productive sites for economic development, open space and other public uses.



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which important issues you would like more information about.**

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