

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to tell you that we did a lot of great things this past session. We brought more money back to Bridgeport and some will go toward reducing the property tax on automobiles. As House Chairman of the Veteran's Committee, I am proud that we passed many bills into law helping our veterans. We also passed a "second chance" bill that will reduce incarceration rates for nonviolent offenders - rather than the costly and, often times, counterproductive act of incarceration.

Another year has passed in my unsuccessful attempt to pass my "conflict of interest" bill. With support from the two Bridgeport senators, my bill was unanimously passed in the Senate on consent. Unfortunately, my bill was not called because it did not have enough support in the House. I will continue to champion and fight for this legislation and hope to have the entire Bridgeport delegation's support next session. To review the issue, our city charter specifically states that city employees cannot serve on the City Council. But due to a loophole in state statute, the city is able to ignore the city charter's prohibition and allows city employees to serve on the City Council. This creates a major conflict of interest. At the state level, state employees cannot serve in the state legislative body. This prohibition is written into the state constitution. Likewise, at the federal level, the United States Constitution prohibits federal employees from serving in Congress. If this isn't allowed at the State and Federal level, why should it be allowed in Bridgeport? We will try again next year.

I am happy to report that we passed a state budget that makes transformative changes to our regressive property tax structure. As a result of a statewide mill rate cap on automobiles, Bridgeport taxpayers will see a 30% reduction in their car tax by 2017. This same law also pledges .5% of the annual state sales tax to our cities and towns, resulting in Bridgeport not losing any revenue due to the car tax reduction and, in fact, receiving roughly \$12 million in increased state funding to offset the burden of residential property taxes.

I hope you find the information in this newsletter helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Being interviewed at the Capitol for the Meet the Leaders TV program



Testifying with Senator Marilyn Moore in Support of my Conflict of Interest Bill

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HELP FOR OUR VETERANS

This year, the legislature supported and advanced legislation that recognizes the important sacrifices that veterans have made while defending our country. Here is a look at some of the legislation we passed this year to help our veterans:

Tax Breaks for Veterans

We cut taxes for Veterans effective for tax years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2015 - giving a 100% tax exemption for military retirement pay. State law used to only provide a 50% exemption. The exemption applies to Federal retirement pay for retired members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Army and Air National Guard.

Increasing Services Available to Veterans on State College & University Campuses

We recently passed legislation to study Connecticut's colleges and universities to find the best practices for the Veterans' Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service (OASIS) Program. The various OASIS programs run independently on individual campuses to help ensure that veterans are aware of the benefits they can use to further their education in the civilian world. Applying the best practices should help offset the concerns that have been brought up in recent years by our college vets about the variances in centers and what is being offered.

Establishing the Connecticut Women Veterans' Program

The Department of Veterans' Affairs will now be required to conduct benefits and services outreach for female veterans, and offer recommendations to the legislature on what types of service initiatives would be best for female veterans. It is critically important that we protect those who protect us and this legislation is a good way to honor these brave women.

Creating the Veterans to Agriculture Program

A new law establishes the Veterans to Agriculture Program, which will give a tax credit to veterans that have a gross income from agricultural production of over \$2,500. The program is facilitated by the Department of Agriculture and UConn, and will provide additional training and educational opportunities.

Helping Incarcerated Veterans Reintegrate

This new law creates an Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Council to help identify the special needs of veterans who have become incarcerated. The Council will make recommendations on the best ways to successfully reintegrate vets back into their communities. These goals and recommendations will be submitted to the Veterans' Affairs Committee in a yearly report starting on January 15, 2016.

Ensuring Vets Have Housing

Since 1940, the Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill has served our vets in need with a range of rehabilitative, medical, and vocational services. Over the years, the Home has fallen into disrepair. The legislature sought to adopt the recommendations of a recent report from the Program Review and Investigation Committee that provides system changes to the home's housing structure. The recommendation was to transform the Domiciliary into two programs, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing. In addition, the Board of Trustees would be strengthened to give it additional autonomy from the Commissioner as well as more oversight over the operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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BRIDGEPORT FISCAL YEAR 2017 STATE AID

Education Cost Sharing	\$182,266,724
Priority School Districts	\$6,963,751
PILOT: State Owned Property	\$3,012,598
PILOT: Colleges & Hospitals	\$7,962,794
Pequot/Mohegan Revenue Sharing	\$6,196,581
School Transportation	\$1,452,541
Local Capital Improvement Program	\$2,413,992
Town Aid Roads	\$1,383,106
Adult Education	\$2,179,158
Grants for Municipal Projects & Municipal Revenue Sharing Account (MRSA)	\$14,026,063
Total State Funds to Bridgeport	\$227,857,308



My annual Help A Hero event at the State Capitol where we collect many items to help homeless veterans.

ECONOMIC SUCCESS THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY

Bridgeport will soon become a leader in sustainable energy with the approval of funding for a new thermal energy loop. This project will provide cheaper, cleaner, more reliable sources of energy to our downtown area which will reduce the cost of doing business and incentivize development in our city. This will not only help our business community and city government save on energy costs, it will also reduce our carbon footprint in the process. I am proud the Bridgeport delegation worked hard together to secure funding for this project.

PROTECTING SENIORS

We have taken steps to protect our seniors from abuse and from being taken advantage of financially. This law, effective October 1st, adds a number of protections, including:

- EMT's are added to the list of mandated reporters of elder abuse.
- Certain financial agents must receive training on elderly fraud, exploitation, and financial abuse.
- Someone convicted of 1st or 2nd degree larceny or 1st degree abuse of an elderly or disabled person is prohibited from inheriting, receiving insurance benefits, or receiving certain property.

A SECOND CHANCE SOCIETY

Connecticut's drug policies have swelled our prisons with nonviolent drug offenders who struggle to reintegrate into society upon release. The Second Chance Society will ensure public safety, save money, and help end the culture of mass incarceration by lowering sentencing for non-violent offenses. The Second Chance Society will give ex-offenders more opportunity to get back into the workforce – and will also save millions in taxpayer dollars while allowing our police force to focus on more pressing crimes.



Working in the House Chamber

RESTORING TRUST BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND OUR COMMUNITIES

This year, we took a look at the critical issue of restoring trust between law enforcement and minority communities. Among some of the most key provisions of the new "Excessive Use of Force" law are: Police units will now face new requirements for promoting diversity and will receive training in the proper use of physical force. They will also be required to document incidents when an officer's discharge of a weapon or use of force likely caused a serious physical injury or death. State police will now be required to use body cameras, as will local police if they receive state grants to fund the equipment and data storage. An independent prosecutor will now be assigned to investigate allegations that an officer's physical force resulted in the death of a person.