

Dear Neighbor,

It is a privilege to represent you and the interest of the Town of Windham in the General Assembly.

Every two years, the legislature's major task is to create a budget that meets all the needs of Connecticut residents. In 2010, the Executive and Legislative Branch finally started to pay all of Connecticut's bills, including the state's share of employee pension payments. State employees have always paid their share into the plan.

Before 2010, our state government failed to make adequate payments, which is why we were faced with cutting \$3.5 billion out of our state budget this session. State employees stepped up and gave back \$1.2 billion over the next two years, which is an enormous help with our budget.

We are on the road to improving Connecticut's economy. Our budget is a bipartisan combination of labor, business, Democrats, Republicans, and the Executive Branch working together.

I will continue to fight for the best interests of Windham. My office is always open to you.

Sincerely,

BONDING FOR OUR FIRE SCHOOL

In November, the Bond Commission approved funding for construction in Eastern Connecticut of a 13,984 square foot administration, educational and vehicle maintenance facility. A new 6,981 square foot Class A Burn Building, a new Training Tower, and a new Rehab Shelter including new fire training props are also part of the planned construction. The Eastern Connecticut Delegation has worked for years to obtain this much-needed funding, and I'm excited that our firefighters will now benefit from an improved facility and increased training availability right here in Windham on Fire School Road.



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CAPITOL UPDATE 2017

TO STAY INFORMED OF IMPORTANT NEWS
FROM THE CAPITOL
PLEASE VISIT MY WEBSITE
TO SIGN UP FOR EMAIL UPDATES:
WWW.HOUSEDEMS.CT.GOV/JOHNSON

SUSAN JOHNSON

PROUDLY SERVING WINDHAM

SUPPORTING WINDHAM HOSPITAL

Windham Hospital continues to be not only the immediate health care provider for Windham area patients, but also one of the largest employers in our region. This session, I worked to support the hospital as an economic driver in our community. The bipartisan budget implements a proposal that will bring new revenue to the state, while also increasing state payments to hospitals above 2017 levels, due to enhanced federal reimbursements. Enacting this agreement will support community hospitals and those like ours that serve a disproportionate share of Medicaid clients. It will also put additional federal dollars into the system, which will have a ripple effect on our economy.

CREATION OF THE OFFICE OF HEALTH STRATEGY

For the last three years, I have been working to ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to hospital health care services. Since Windham Hospital changed their Critical Care Unit to a Progressive Care Unit, there have been numerous local public hearings to examine the Certificate of Need (CON) Process. Together with Senator Flexer and Representatives Haddad and Orange, I proposed language to improve the CON Statutes. Based on our work, Lt. Governor Wyman created a task force to study CON in Connecticut. The taskforce recommended the creation of the Office of Health Strategy. This office will make sure that access to health care and all levels of care will be evenly distributed throughout the state.



Rep. Johnson with Rep. Haddad and Senator Flexer testifying before the Public Health Committee on Connecticut's Certificate of Need Statutes.

BATTLING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Legislation passed this year strengthens state human trafficking laws, making the crime a Class A felony. This new, well-defined law also allows the state to criminally charge anyone who patronizes or solicits minors trafficked for sex. It also requires that human trafficking victims have access to treatment programs that address the type of trauma experienced by young victims of this deplorable crime.

FIXING THE EDUCATION COST SHARING (ECS) FORMULA

In recent years, budgets have distributed education aid to towns through arbitrary block grants, a process that a judge has ruled is irrational and unfair. The legislature passed a new formula as part of the budget that takes into consideration the number of low-income students and English language learners in a district. Additional reforms are still needed, and I will continue to work with my colleagues to create a predictable formula for education aid that fairly funds our schools, regardless of your zip code. Our bipartisan budget preserved Windham's education funding, allocating \$26,582,071 in Fiscal Year 2018, and \$26,989,848 in 2019.



Rep. Johnson and Senator Flexer visit with students from Saint Mary-Saint Joseph School.

CARE 4 KIDS FUNDING RESTORED

There are currently 226 Windham children enrolled in the Care 4 Kids Child Care Subsidy Program. The bipartisan budget restores funding which will allow the program to reopen for enrollment for families who have been on the waiting list. This program helps families afford safe, quality child care and allows parents to remain in the workforce.

AFFORDABLE HIGHER EDUCATION

Making college more affordable is one of my top priorities. We restored \$2 million in higher education funding that had been cut in September. This funding supports Eastern Connecticut State University and Quinebaug Valley Community College and had it not been restored, tuition rates could have increased dramatically. Additionally, we took important steps aimed at lowering the cost of attending our state's public colleges and universities by requiring state schools to establish guidelines to minimize student costs and cut down on textbook charges.



Rep. Johnson with Rep. Stafstrom and college students at a press conference for the CT Coalition for Justice in Education Funding.

HELPING OUR SENIORS

Our budget included important steps to ease the tax burden on seniors, such as keeping the \$200 property tax credit and phasing out income taxes on Social Security and pensions. The budget also funds Dial-A-Ride.

HONORING OUR FALLEN HEROES

We passed a bill that allows municipalities to provide a property tax exemption to a parent or surviving spouse of a service member killed in action. A municipality may exempt up to \$20,000 or 10% of the property's assessed value.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Having a highly skilled workforce is critical to attracting new businesses, keeping the high-performing companies we have, and connecting our residents with good paying, quality jobs. That is why we created a landmark initiative within the Department of Labor that will strengthen existing workforce development programs and implement new job training opportunities using a mix of public and private funds. In addition, we are moving the vo-tech schools out from under the State Department of Education so they can be more responsive to job market changes. We are also requiring state colleges and universities to develop a plan to offer an online course in mechatronics, a growing field within the manufacturing industry. These efforts will help us rebuild a stronger middle class in Connecticut.

HELPING FAMILIES ACHIEVE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

I have been honored to work on improving policies that create difficulties for modern families who face economic challenges. Policies that address how our families provide for their children, care for the elderly, and obtain education so they can increase their economic stability must be updated. Our social and economic justice policies were developed when many archaic social and legal limits were placed on men and women in the workforce. American social changes over the last 50 years require us to review how we can improve access to state government services for those trying to improve their economic futures. Windham and other towns will work with the Office of Early Childhood to establish a holistic family centered support system. Updating rules governing various agency programs to make them consistent among agencies will give families access to resources that will enable them to become economically self-sufficient.