



TOP PRIORITIES

Encouraging Job Growth

We continued the state's commitment to job growth and economic recovery with new legislation during special session that expands the Small Business Express Program, allowing an estimated 3,600 additional businesses to have access to state funding. The program allows small businesses to access much-needed funding for capital investments and hiring. In addition, the bill:

- Establishes the Unemployed Armed Forces Member STEP-UP (Subsidized Training and Employment Program) with grants to subsidize a business's cost of hiring unemployed veterans during their first 180 days (about six months) on the job.
- Creates the "Connecticut Made" and "Connecticut Treasures" programs to promote products made in Connecticut and promote the state's cultural, educational and historic attractions.
- Develops a plan to allow the state to give preferential incentives and economic development assistance to companies that will relocate jobs from overseas to Connecticut.

Education Reform

Our education initiative will provide new support to help turn around underperforming schools. The education reform package has long-term implications for our children and for the state's economic well-being. The better we prepare children for the 21st Century workforce, the stronger we'll make Connecticut's economy. The bill:

- Includes more funding for school-based health centers and family resource centers.
- Recognizes the critical importance of early childhood education by underwriting 1,000 school readiness slots for preschoolers and funding initiatives to improve early reading success.
- Creates the Commissioner's Network, to provide the intensive supports and interventions needed to turn around 25 of the most chronically low-performing schools.

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State Representative

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96th District



Dear Neighbor,

From jobs to education to improved response to natural disasters, the legislature helped citizens across our state in many ways in 2012.

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 for growing companies.

This spring, we balanced a budget by keeping our funding promise to cities and towns without raising taxes. Historic changes were made to our educational system so our children can succeed. We made it easier for people to exercise voting rights, and demanded that utility companies respond better when storms and crises hit. We repealed a death penalty law that wasn't working, and further protected victims of domestic violence.

Along the way, we gave new hope to those suffering from debilitating illnesses by legalizing medical marijuana and helped children with special needs by improving Individualized Education Plans and creating a study on workforce development, training and employment of young adults with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

I hope this report is informative. I'm happy to answer any questions about these issues or any others facing our state or your family. Together we can create a better future for our families.

HOUSE DEMOCRATS of CONNECTICUT

CAPITOL REPORT 2012

State Representative

Roland Lemar

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If you need additional assistance or have questions, please contact me:

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Highway Safety Increased – The ‘move-over’ law is an important tool for safety on our roads. This year we expanded the “move-over” law to include two lane highways as well as road maintenance vehicles and tow trucks. Now, the law requires drivers to move-over one lane if an emergency vehicle or maintenance vehicle with flashing lights is parked on the shoulder of any state highway.

According to FBI statistics, traffic crashes claim the lives of more police personnel than any other cause of death in the line of duty, including shootings. This new law will protect our law enforcement officials and roadway maintenance crews working on all of our highways.

Job Creation through Brownfield Cleanup – allows swifter conversion of contaminated and long-abandoned properties to productive sites for economic development, open space and other public uses. This session, we directed the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to perform an in-depth analysis of the state's brownfield remediation and development programs and recommend changes to those programs.



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SENIOR FOCUS

Protecting the quality of life for our senior citizens is a top priority. This year the legislature focused on healthcare and grandparents’ rights.

Grandparents’ Rights – Family relationships are complicated and grandparents can sometimes be separated from their grandchildren’s lives particularly when divorce or disagreements occur. This new law helps grandparents seeking visitation rights by providing guidance on evidence showing a parent-like relationship exists and that a denial of visitation rights could cause harm to the child. Decisions should be made in a child’s best interests and this legislation helps do that.

Hospice Care – With just two licensed hospices in the state, this new law will permit hospices to follow federal standards, giving smaller hospice facilities the opportunity to provide high quality services that allow patients to stay closer to family and friends. This bill will help our state to ensure that residents have access to health care services across the full continuum of care.

Preserving Medicare Eligibility – This legislation ensured that thousands of seniors and people with disabilities could continue to use the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to help pay for their Medicare co-pays and deductibles by raising the income limit for MSP to accommodate a 3.6 percent Social Security cost of living increase (COLA) which took effect January 1. It would have been a tragic irony if a welcome increase in Social Security made some Connecticut residents ineligible for these Medicare benefits.

I am proud to support these and other initiatives for our seniors. After working throughout their lives and contributing to society, seniors deserve our respect and assistance to help them enjoy their later years.

REDUCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

We have made great progress in helping families affected by domestic violence in recent years, but the problem persists in our communities. Building on earlier successes, this year we strengthened the state’s laws to better protect victims, hold abusers accountable, and give new tools to law enforcement by:

- Improving access to and enforcement of protective and restraining orders
- Giving police officers new tools, including a model policy for responding to domestic violence incidents
- Allowing victims to report email and texting violations of restraining and protective orders in the town where they reside, where they receive the communication or where the communication was initiated
- Extending the maximum length of restraining orders from six months to one year
- Ordering a feasibility study for a 911 texting system
- Requiring the courts to share protective orders with schools that victims attend, upon request of a victim
- Strengthening the definition of stalking to ensure that stalking incidents—including digital stalking—are appropriately punished

VETERANS



Desecrating Veteran Memorials – Honoring the present and past sacrifices of our veterans is one of my highest priorities. It is shocking to see an increase in thefts and vandalism of veteran memorials. We increased penalties for desecrating veteran’s memorials beyond the monetary value of what was vandalized.

Diversionary programs for Vets with PTSD & Legal Issues – So many of our service men and women return home and face a variety of challenges, not the least of which are legal issues and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. A federally funded pilot program for veterans dealing with these issues is helpful but limited, so we expanded the program to more locations throughout the state.

Custody Orders While on Deployment – In order to reduce the psychological trauma a parent feels when they leave a small child for an extended period of time, we protected parents’ permanent custody orders in the event of deployment. We provided an opportunity for the military parent to create temporary custody orders that remain in effect only as long as they are away on deployment and for as much contact as possible between children and the parent who is absent while on military duty by providing contact by phone or email.



Cut along dotted line.

Please check the boxes below and indicate which important issues you would like more information about.

- ☐ Education
☐ Job Creation
☐ Other

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