

BANNING VARIABLE ELECTRIC RATES

This year, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to protect residents from predatory electricity providers who offer a low introductory rate that increases rapidly afterwards. The protections enacted require competitive electric suppliers to give their customers a 60-day notice before the end of their contract. Suppliers cannot charge these customers a termination or early cancellation fee and must allow customers who want to switch to standard service the ability to do so within 72 hours.



STUDENT LOAN BILL OF RIGHTS

We created an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman to assist student borrowers in navigating the loan process and educate them about the different options they have for repaying their loans. The Student Loan Ombudsman will also be responsible for handling student issues and complaints about their loan servicers, and will be investigating these claims to ensure that loan servicers are conducting themselves in a proper manner.

PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

The United States is the only advanced country in the world to not guarantee paid maternity/paternity leave or paid sick leave for its workers. This session, I introduced a bill to establish a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program in Connecticut. The first significant steps toward implementation will be taken when the state Labor Commissioner submits a report to the General Assembly by February 1, 2016 to establish procedures to put this program into practice.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

ROLAND LEMAR

PROUDLY SERVING NEW HAVEN/EAST HAVEN



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CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for your support. It has been an honor to represent you in the General Assembly for another term. There have been many intensely debated issues this legislative session and it has been a privilege to represent the people of New Haven and East Haven in each of those discussions.

The legislature took significant steps this session to lower the cost of higher education. We passed a law which led to the lowest student loan interest rate ever offered by the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA), and became the first state in the country to establish a Student Loan Bill of Rights.

We also focused on protecting our environment by banning plastic microbeads which pollute our waters, and broadened the ban on harmful pesticides to better protect children from exposure to these chemicals.

We took steps to begin transforming our state’s transportation system. We have crumbling roads and bridges and traffic jams that are preventable but we must first invest resources into highway redesign, fast and reliable train service, and additional bus routes.

I hope you find this information to be of use and please know that New Haven’s and East Haven’s working families remained at the heart of each vote I cast in the House Chamber. As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Roland Lemar in black ink.



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**LONG ISLAND SOUND BLUE PLAN
AND RESOURCE & USE INVENTORY**

Long Island Sound remains one of our most precious state resources. To protect the Sound, the “Blue Plan” will inventory the resources, uses and conservation areas of our portion of Long Island Sound. With this plan in place, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, along with the newly established 16-member Long Island Sound Resource & Use Inventory and Blue Plan Advisory Committee, will be able to more clearly and effectively manage our offshore waters through a data-driven process. It will also help streamline, allocate, and coordinate our resources.

**HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE
FOR MENTAL OR NERVOUS CONDITIONS**

Several recent reports have identified a gap between publicly funded mental health services and those covered by the private insurance market. This year we required that certain services be covered by private health insurance plans, including mental health and substance use screenings, crisis stabilization services, inpatient and outpatient hospital and residential care, home-based services, and programs to improve outcomes for children and families.

EXTENDING THE FORECLOSURE MEDIATION PROGRAM

The Foreclosure Mediation Program has provided vital services to consumers facing foreclosure, helping many families avoid foreclosure. This year we extended the sunset date of the Foreclosure Mediation program to July 2019, ensuring that this essential program can continue to function and serve more Connecticut residents.

STUDENT LOAN RATE DROP

In a historic step towards increasing college affordability, the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) announced that it will offer a fixed interest rate of 4.95% for new student loans, down from its current rate of 6.75%. Not only is this the lowest rate that CHESLA has ever offered, it is also significantly lower than the new Federal PLUS loan rate of 6.84%.



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21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT

Our state budget is balanced, under the spending cap, and invests in Connecticut’s transportation infrastructure, which is critical to our future economy. By investing in transportation projects, such as the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail line, roads, bridges, and ports, we are encouraging smart growth, addressing traffic congestion, and bringing sustainable jobs home to Connecticut.

PATIENT-DESIGNATED CAREGIVERS

A new law known as the CARE Act (Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable) aims to reduce hospital readmission rates in Connecticut. Many times, patients whose family members serve as their caregivers are discharged from the hospital without proper instructions. The result is that some patients end up back in the hospital. This law requires a hospital to document a designated caregiver in the patient’s discharge plan, attempt to notify the caregiver of the patient’s discharge, and instruct the caregiver on any post-discharge tasks with which the patient will need assistance.

A SECOND CHANCE SOCIETY

Connecticut’s drug policies have filled 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 nonviolent offenses. The Second Chance Society will give ex-offenders more opportunities to get back into the workforce – and save millions in taxpayer dollars.

RESTORING TRUST BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MINORITY 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 important provisions of the new “Excessive Use of Force” law are: 1) Police units will now face new requirements for promoting diversity and will receive training in the proper use of physical force. 2) They will also be required to document incidents where an officer’s discharge of a weapon or use of force likely caused a serious physical injury or death. 3) State police will now be required to use body cameras and local police to do so if they receive state grants to fund the equipment and data storage. 4) An independent prosecutor will be assigned to investigate allegations that an officer’s physical force resulted in the death of a person.

HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES

This year we allocated funds for the highly successful Small Business Express Program. We are also requiring the Department of Economic and Community Development to dedicate funds to develop a program for construction projects for minority business enterprises. These measures will create jobs and improve economic opportunities for Connecticut families.