



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**Rick Lopes**

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Dear Neighbor,

I am pleased to share with you this update following the 2013 legislative session. Every session offers its own set of challenges, but this year's were unique. With the extreme sadness of the Newtown tragedy weighing on everyone, the 2013 Legislative Session was a very trying time. In the spirit of bipartisanship, we passed gun violence prevention bill with several other landmark bills that will protect our children and address critical mental health issues while respecting the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

I am proud to say that we passed a number of measures to make the lives easier for residents of Connecticut. We passed legislation promoting small business expansion, making it easier to hire veterans, and enabled health care cost cutting measures and expanding access to insurance coverage through Access Health CT.

Nothing makes me prouder than representing your needs and working on legislation that will help you. To continue doing this I need your feedback. Please call my office at 860-240-8585 or email me at [Rick.Lopes@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Rick.Lopes@cga.ct.gov) with your questions, concerns, comments, and suggestions. I look forward to talking with you soon.

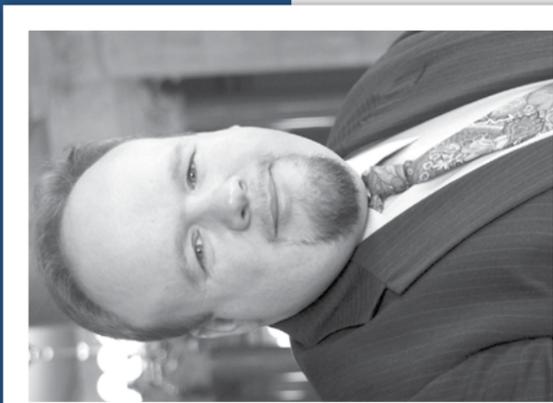
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SERVING NEW BRITAIN AND NEWINGTON | 24TH DISTRICT

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# Rick Lopes

SERVING NEW BRITAIN AND NEWINGTON  
24TH DISTRICT



## CAPITOL UPDATE 2013

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### **STUDENTS WALKING TO SCHOOL**

This legislation strengthens the penalties applied when the operator of a motor vehicle fails to immediately stop when directed to do so by a school crossing guard. Any person who violates this law is fined 450 dollars. The previous law imposed fines of anywhere between 100 and 500 dollars. Upon receipt of a written report from any school crossing guard specifying the license plate number, color and type of any motor vehicle observed by such school crossing guard violating any provision of the law, a police officer may issue a written warning or summons to the owner of the vehicle.

### **SCHOOL SAFETY**

Parents need peace of mind knowing that their children are safe in their schools. Many districts have armed school resource officers and others have security guards. This law requires that an armed guard working in a school must meet certain requirements. If they are not a police officer, they must be a retired police officer or state trooper who was in good standing at the time of their retirement. They must receive training from the Police Officer Standards and Training Council on school security in compliance with recent firearms legislation. This law ensures that if an armed guard in a school is not a current police officer they are receiving the same training on school security and firearms as active duty police officers.

### **DISTRACTED DRIVING**

Distracted driving - especially the use of cell phones while driving - is an increasingly common complaint. This law addresses distracted driving while also making changes to several motor vehicle statutes. Fines are increased for using a hand-held cell phone or other electronic device while driving: A first offense for distracted driving is now \$150, the second offense is \$300 and a third offense and subsequent offenses are now \$500. These violations will now appear on the offender's driving history and will be made available to insurers. A task force is also being created to study how to prevent distracted driving.



### **HOMEMAKER COMPANION AGENCIES**

This law helps to protect some of our most vulnerable residents, requiring that homemaker companion agencies notify clients in writing that a comprehensive background check was performed on the employee. This must occur before sending an employee to a client's residence for the first time. The legislation also adds additional consumer protections to agency contracts, including specifying payment obligations and when contracts between the agency and client are enforceable and can be cancelled.



### **Genetically-Engineered Food**

This law makes Connecticut the first state to pass a Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) labeling law. It responds to health and safety concerns that have been raised in relation to these foods and the lack of scientific evidence to support their safety and nutritional value. By requiring foods to be labeled under certain circumstances, this legislation allows consumers to know whether or not their foods contain GMOs and make individual and informed decisions about whether or not to consume them. GMOs are created through laboratory processes where DNA is extracted from one species and inserted into an unrelated species to produce a trait, for example, making the food resistant to herbicides and pesticides. The most common genetically modified foods are soy, corn, sugar and cottonseed oil. This law requires that certain foods that contain GMOs be labeled as such, excluding certain farm products. The requirement becomes effective once similar laws are enacted in four states, including one that borders Connecticut, with an aggregate population totaling 20 million.



### **Manufacturing Assistance**

This legislation creates jobs by helping small businesses in the state through the Small Business Express program implemented in the special session of June 2012. It adds money to the Small Business Express program that provides loans and matching grants to businesses with 100 or fewer employees. Funds were moved from the Manufacturing Assistance Act program into the Small Business Express account so that more funds will be available for this very successful program that has helped many small businesses in the state to create jobs.

### **PHYSICAL THERAPY CO-PAYMENTS**

Co-pays for physical therapy have risen in recent years, creating a deterrent for patients seeking these essential services. Physical therapy may require multiple visits per week over the course of several weeks or months in order for the patient to regain strength and mobility, and avoid chronic injuries and future health costs. This pro-consumer law limits co-pays for visits to in-network physical therapists to \$30 per visit.

### **SYNCHRONIZING PRESCRIPTION REFILLS**

This law protects a patient's drug coverage by requiring that insurance companies cover prescriptions filled in a synchronized manner as long as the patient, their doctor and their pharmacist approve this medication plan. By simplifying the prescription refill process this legislation helps small pharmacies that traditionally offer home delivery of prescriptions, allowing them to cut down overhead costs by only delivering to a specific home once a month.