

THE BUDGET - WHO PAYS LESS

Most car owners will see a cut in their motor vehicle tax as we capped the car tax mill rate statewide at 32 mills beginning July 2016 and 29.36 mills in July 2017. No one's car tax will go past these rates in this plan.

In addition, increased state aid for every city and town will allow municipalities to lower their mill rates. And, private colleges that own off-campus property, and larger non-profit hospitals that begin to buy property, will begin to contribute to a town's tax base to help pay for services they use such as fire, police, and public works. This lessens the property tax burden currently borne solely by families and small businesses in our communities.

Towns with a larger number of tax-exempt properties (e.g. state property, churches, colleges and hospitals) receive additional aid for further property tax relief as well.

In addition, military veterans' retirement pay will be 100% exempt from the state income tax.

This year, we also allocated more 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.

STATE AID 2017 NEW BRITAIN/NEWINGTON

State Property PILOT	\$3,710,093 / \$749,383
College and Hospital PILOT	\$2,692,730 / \$1,633,915
Pequot Grants	\$2,298,649 / \$254,786
Public School Transportation	\$1,146,589 / \$219,259
Non-Public School Transportation	\$186,605 / \$4,927
Adult Education	\$601,344 / \$34,276
Education Cost Sharing	\$86,678,662 / \$13,226,394
Town Aid Road	\$770,020 / \$415,388
Local Capital Improvement Program	\$991,377 / \$209,032
Grants for Municipal Projects	\$1,383,881 / \$917,869
Sales Tax Revenue Sharing	\$5,217,430 / \$1,113,984
Total State Funds	\$105,677,379 / \$18,779,213



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

RICK LOPES

PROUDLY SERVING THE 24TH DISTRICT, NEW BRITAIN AND NEWINGTON

CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

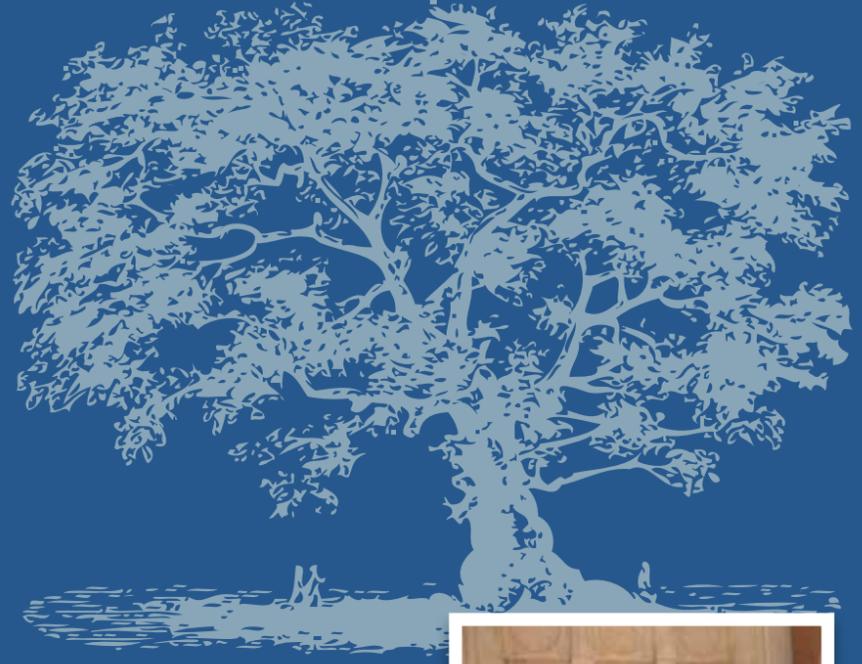
It has been an honor and a privilege to represent you in the General Assembly for this legislative term. There have been many intensely debated issues this legislative session and the slowly improving economy has forced us to make very difficult choices in order to insure that the economic recovery does not stall as many residents are still struggling to find stability.

We have continued to make important investments in Connecticut's Small Business Express Program, which has succeeded in helping to grow our small business community. The property tax burden has also remained a primary concern for many small businesses, and thankfully we worked to increase municipal aid in order to ease property taxes. Make no mistake that every dollar we send to our town from the state is a dollar we do not have to raise with local property taxes.

We have also made investments in our transportation system and increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding for many cities. These investments are critical to growing our economy as businesses will not come to Connecticut if their employees cannot get to work in a safe and timely manner and if we do not have an educated workforce ready to fill 21st century jobs.

I hope you find this information to be of use and please do not hesitate to call my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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Rep Lopes speaks with Rep Bruce Morris (Norwalk) about education funding.



Iwo Jima Memorial in New Britain



COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

Student loan debt is an issue that impacts many Connecticut families. Sixty-four percent of college graduates in our state have student loan debt. This year, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to create a Student Loan Bill of Rights, which establishes an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman. This office will: regulate student loan servicers, compile data on borrower complaints, develop a financial literacy education course for students, and will help student borrowers and their parents navigate the loan process.

Students can also take advantage of the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority's (CHESLA) lowest interest rate yet. CHESLA has announced that it will offer its lowest-ever fixed interest rate at 4.95%, down from its current rate of 6.75%. This rate is also significantly lower than the Federal PLUS loan rate of 6.84%.

In addition, we passed a law that will help address the rising cost of college textbooks. This new law establishes a pilot program on the use of open-source textbooks in hopes of increasing their usage in colleges across the state. Open-source textbooks are licensed, college-level textbooks made available for free on the Internet to students, faculty, and the public.

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

This year, we worked to help Connecticut close the achievement gap and improve educational outcomes for all students. We will increase early childhood literacy programs by requiring the State Department of Education to hire a Director of Reading Initiatives who is charged with implementing a statewide reading plan and coordinating Connecticut's various reading initiatives. In addition, more teachers will be certified in shortage areas, more minority teachers will be recruited, and educators will be given new strategies to build better relationships with students of different cultures. We also created a pilot program in four towns and cities to identify best practices for English Language Learners (ELL) instruction and will develop standards for students receiving longer periods of specialized instruction.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

AUTHORIZING PHARMACISTS TO DISPENSE DRUGS IN 90-DAY QUANTITIES

To better help patients with chronic illnesses and others, pharmacists are now allowed to refill a prescription for up to a 90-day supply. The 90-day supply must not exceed the total quantity prescribed by the doctor, and must not be a controlled drug. The pharmacist also must inform the doctor of the refill within 48 hours after the refill is made. This does not apply to patients whose insurance won't cover the cost without additional copayment.

PREVENTING THE SALE OF COUNTERFEIT PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Prescription drug counterfeiting has become an increasing problem worldwide. We took steps to strengthen our state's counterfeit prescription drug laws. This new law establishes penalties, both civil and criminal, for dispensing, importing or reimporting of counterfeit drugs or devices by an individual in Connecticut.

KEEPING ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE NATIONAL GUARD FROM BEING EXCLUDED FROM COVERAGE UNDER CERTAIN LIFE INSURANCE POLICIES

We are always looking for ways to help servicemen and women and their families. One way is to make sure that their families are able to get the same kind of life insurance coverage that civilian families get. Insurers will be prohibited from issuing a life insurance policy or annuity that excludes coverage for the military service member in the event that his or her injury or death is military service or war.



Rep Lopes speaks with Rep Peter Tercyak (New Britain) in the house chamber.