

# 2008 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



## REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT W. MEGNA

SERVING THE 97TH DISTRICT  
NEW HAVEN

DEAR NEIGHBORS,

I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE A SHORT SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE LAWS ENACTED BY THE 2008 LEGISLATURE WHICH WILL ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE 97TH DISTRICT. WITH STATE REVENUES DECLINING, WE LIMITED ANY NEW SPENDING DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION AND DID NOT MAKE ANY REVISIONS TO THE BIENNIAL BUDGET ADOPTED DURING THE 2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT THE INFORMATION IN THIS 2008 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE, PLEASE CONTACT ME. I THANK YOU FOR PLACING YOUR TRUST IN ME.

SINCERELY,

ROBERT MEGNA  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE



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**Bishop Woods Update:** In past newsletters, I have shared with you the community spirit involved in cleaning up Bishop Woods. Now, I'm extremely happy to report that spirit is still alive and well. Thanks to concerned and active members of our community, and especially to the City of New Haven, the restoration of Bishop Woods continued throughout this year uninterrupted. New signs appear throughout the bird sanctuary warning people against unlawfully operating

ATVs and dirt bikes and carrying out other illegal activities. In addition, as an additional warning, erecting hundreds of feet of steel barriers around the perimeter of the woods should further help in discouraging illegal dumping and the use of ATVs and dirt bikes.



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**YOUR VOICE IN  
HARTFORD!**

# ENVIRONMENT

**PROTECTING CONNECTICUT'S WILDLIFE:** Birds and other small animals entangled and injured by discarded fishing line face a cruel death. PA 08-144, enacted into law this session, requires all sport fishing licenses to state that it is a violation of law for anyone to intentionally discard fishing line or other litter. Violators are subject to a fine of up to \$199. In addition, illegal hunting of moose and bear will now result in the suspension or revocation of the violator's hunting license. As a licensed wildlife rehabilitator I have often been called to aid in the care of birds injured as a result of improperly discarded fishing line. Hopefully there will be fewer calls as a result of PA 08-144.



**SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES:** Polluting facilities are often concentrated in urban and low income areas. New Haven is an example of an environmentally "distressed" city. A new law this year requires applicants seeking approval for new or expanded polluting facilities in environmental justice communities to:

- Provide notification,
- Submit a public participation plan,
- Hold an informal public meeting, and,
- Consult with municipal officials to arrange for an environmental benefit agreement to ease the facility's impact. PA 08-94



**CONNECTICUT GLOBAL WARMING SOLUTIONS:** We are finally addressing global warming in Connecticut instead of just talking about it! The Connecticut General Assembly passed landmark global warming legislation by establishing mandatory greenhouse gas emission caps of 10% below 1990 levels that must be attained by 2020 and 80% below 2001 levels by 2050. This law will require low-carbon fuel standards for all motor vehicle and home heating fuels sold in the state. It also requires revision the State Building Code to reflect more stringent energy standards. PA 08-98



# INSURANCE

**"STEERING":** Need auto body work on your car following a crash? Public Act 08-146 protects the owners of automobiles from a process known as "steering." "Steering" is when an insurance company tries to coax a car crash victim into using only their recommended repair facilities. This public act requires a notice in motor vehicle repair shops, on a repair appraisal or estimate, and on auto insurance identification cards informing customers of their right to choose the licensed repair shop of their choice to fix their vehicles.



**SURPLUS LINES INSURANCE POLICIES:** Insurance policies that are offered by unauthorized insurers or an insurer not licensed to do business in Connecticut are called surplus line insurance policies. These policies are purchased when a Connecticut registered insurance company does not want to cover the risk involved in their regular policies. Surplus line policies are not regulated by the Connecticut Department of Insurance, and therefore consumers are not protected by the Connecticut Insurance Guaranty Association should the company become insolvent. Common in urban areas such as New Haven, surplus lines insurance policies will now be required to boldly print in capital letters notice that "This policy is not protected by the Connecticut Insurance Guaranty Association." I personally wrote and introduced this law to help inform the homeowner and business insurance consumers of this type of insurance. PA 08-129



**FORECLOSURES:** With foreclosures on the rise in Connecticut, legislators passed PA 08-176 that:

- Created and funded a multi tiered mortgage assistance program within the Department of Economic and Community Development;
- Created a right to appeal to the Banking Commissioner for a six-month moratorium on bank action;
- Prohibited certain lending and brokerage practices;
- Provided for court appointment of counsel in a foreclosure action.



For additional information contact the foreclosure assistance hotline at 877-472-8312 or the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority at 860-571-3500.

# SENIORS

**STATE-FUNDED HOME CARE PROGRAM FOR THE DISABLED:** Presently in Connecticut, people 65 years of age and older can be eligible for the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders. This law increases asset limits for the pilot home and community based services program for adults under 65. The increases for 2008 are \$20,880 to \$31,320 for a single person and \$31,320 to \$41,760 for a married couple. PA 08-88

**GRANDPARENTS** or other relative caregivers appointed guardian of a child through Superior Court who are not receiving subsidized guardianship or foster care payments from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) can now apply for grants under the probate-court administered Kinship Fund and Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund. Currently, eligibility for these grants is restricted to grandparents or relative caregivers appointed guardian of a child through probate court. PA 08-97

**CONFIDENTIALITY OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS:** To help control identity theft, the legislature passed laws requiring entities which use social security numbers to:

1. Shred personal information prior to its disposal,
2. Create a privacy protection policy to ensure confidentiality, and PA 08-167
3. Eliminate the social security numbers of individuals from certain vital records except those used for medical, statistical or research purposes. PA 08-66



**HOSPICE CARE:** Connecticut is one of only a few states that have not elected to provide a Medicaid hospice benefit to its low-income residents under the age of 65. PA 08-158 allows individuals under age 65 to choose a hospice program to direct and manage care in the final days of life—whether receiving Medicaid or not. This bill requires the Department of Social Services to amend the Medicaid state plan to add hospice services starting January 1, 2009.