

Dear Friends:

Thank you once again for the confidence you have shown me, by electing me to represent your interests in Hartford. This session I had the opportunity to serve the legislature, and you, as a member of the following committees: Energy and Technology, Commerce, and Transportation.

This newsletter is highlighting only a few of the key issues we dealt with this session. If you would like copies of the legislation listed (or others), feel free to contact me at any of the numbers listed.

It has been an interesting and rewarding two years for me. I want to thank you for your letters, calls and e-mail. I look forward to serving you in the future.

Warmest Regards,



Russell A. Morin
State Representative

EDUCATION NEWS!

High School Credit for Language Courses

With many students taking advantage of world language learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom, this bill recognizes the importance of doing so to attain fluency and offers students the opportunity to seek up to four credits toward the foreign language requirement for high school graduation. To receive credit, students must first pass a proficiency exam in the language.
PA 08-138



2008 Legislative Report

At the Capitol:
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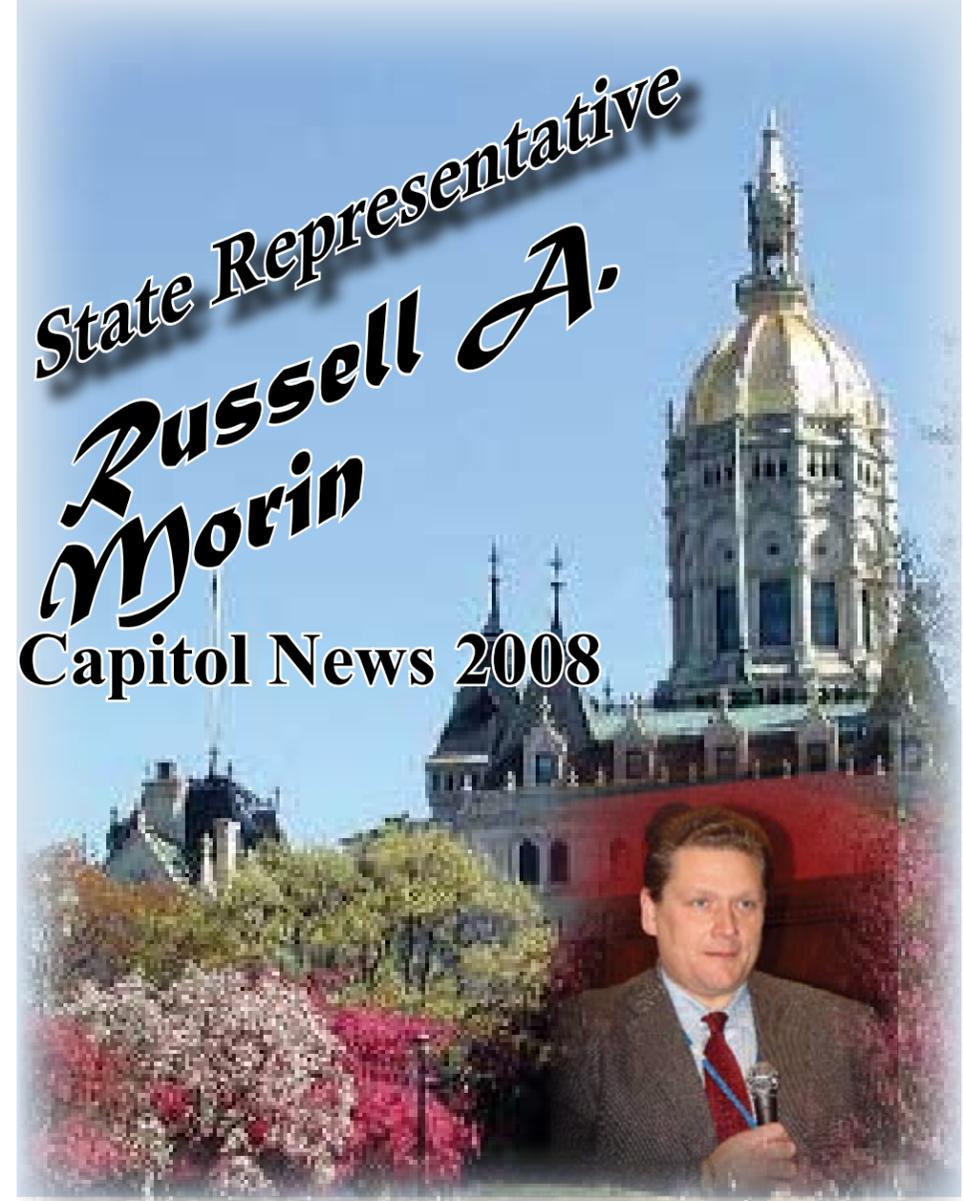
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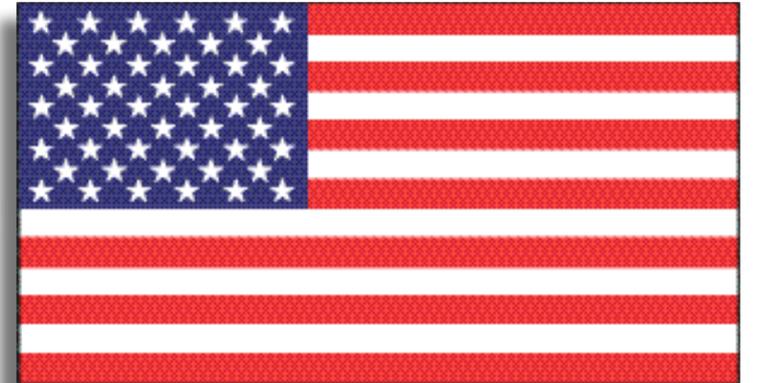
- 2008 Senior Laws
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- 2008 Major Public Acts
- 2008 Laws Affecting Children
- 2008 Laws Affecting Business
- 2008 Laws Affecting Municipalities

**State Representative
Russell A.
Morin
Capitol News 2008**



**PROUDLY SERVING THE 28th DISTRICT
Wethersfield**

CAPITOL UPDATE 2008



HEALTH ISSUES!

☑ The Health and well-being of Connecticut's residents is a top priority of the General Assembly. Reports have shown that many minority ethnic groups receive lower quality care than their counterparts, even when income, age, insurance, and health status are taken into consideration. To begin to address the myriad health care related disparities for members of the state's minority communities, the legislature passed a bill this session that establishes a 32-member Commission on Health Equity within the Office of the Health Care Advocate for administrative purposes. The office will work to eliminate disparities in health status based on race, ethnicity, and linguistic ability and improve the quality of health for all state residents. PA 08-171

☑ This year the legislature took steps to provide patients with information to help them make well-informed decisions when choosing their health care providers. Current law requires Connecticut-licensed physicians to provide the Department of Public Health (DPH) with a profile that includes information on their medical education, practice specialties, appointments to medical school faculty, the hospitals and nursing homes where they have privileges, and information on disciplinary actions, malpractice claims, and felony convictions within the last 10 years. Our new legislation requires that dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, podiatrists, naturopaths, dental hygienists, advanced practice registered nurses, and physical therapists also file profiles for DPH to post online. Physician profiles are currently available to the public on DPH's website at www.physicians.dph.state.ct.us. Effective January 1, 2010 PA 08-109

MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The mortgage crisis has hit many Connecticut families hard this year, so the legislature took action to assist those families affected. House Bill 5577 offers a new foreclosure mediation program that the courts will use to determine if and how families can keep making mortgage payments, thus helping them avoid foreclosure. The bill also creates stricter regulations and greater penalties on lenders and brokers when writing loans for people with limited income and who carry higher debt. To find out more about these programs call the Department of Banking's Foreclosure Assistance Hotline at 877-472-8313 or Connecticut Housing Finance Authority at 860-571-3500. PA 08-176

SENIOR ISSUES!

Support for Grandparents and Other Relative Caregivers

Many children, 4.7%, are living in grandparent-headed households in our state; another 1.5% are living with other relatives. Recognizing this special need, this bill gives the same rights to grandparents and other relative caregivers appointed through Superior Court, and who are not receiving subsidized guardianship or foster care payments from the Department of Children and Families (DCF). They will now be able to apply for grants under the Probate Court administered Kinship Fund and Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund. Previously, only guardians appointed through the Probate Court were able to receive financial support. Effective July 1, 2008 PA 08-97

Telephone and Cable Installation Fees for Nursing Home Residents

This bill prohibits telephone and television cable providers from charging a fee when residents of nursing homes, residential care homes, or rest homes change rooms within the facility. It also prohibits the owner of the facility from charging a fee for these services when changing rooms. PA 08-15

Admission of Elderly Persons to Public and Subsidized Housing

Elderly who need to terminate their leases early upon being accepted to subsidized housing (after being on a waiting list) are faced with either losing their security deposits or other legal action when they terminate their leases early. To address this we have passed a new law, effective October 1, 2008, which will allow low-income seniors age 62 and older as well as certified disabled individuals who have applied for and been accepted into state or federal subsidized housing to terminate their existing lease or rental agreement without penalty if they provide 30 days written notice to their landlord. PA 08-93

The Homecare Option Program for the Elderly (HOPE)

The Homecare Option Program for the Elderly (HOPE) offers participants who establish an individual savings account within this state-administered trust fund to provide beneficiaries with funds to pay for qualified home care expenses. Capital gains and dividends earned on contributions to these accounts are exempt from the designated account beneficiary's state income tax. Also, it expands those who benefit from the HOPE account to any beneficiary. Beneficiaries can withdraw funds from the account which would otherwise not be covered by long term health insurance or Medicare. PA 08-140

HONORING OUR VETERANS

I am proud to say that I co-sponsored the following three bills which honor our veterans. First is a bill which will assist members of the state National Guard in affording a graduate education. We extended their undergraduate tuition waiver to include graduate programs at the University of Connecticut and other Connecticut State Universities. Secondly, to honor our veterans we have eliminated the \$10 fee for the Gold Star Family license plates, for relatives of state residents killed in active military duty. Lastly, we passed legislation which will ensure that the Commissioner of Veteran's Affairs has access to the list of eligible veterans so they can be awarded certain medals posthumously. This bill also requires the adjutant general to issue an achievement ribbon to the soldier, airman, and noncommissioned officer of the year in the Guard.

YOUR CAR, YOUR CHOICE

New legislation will give vehicle owners—rather than insurance companies—the right to choose where repairs are made after an accident. This law is meant to eliminate “steering,” the practice of insurance companies requiring repairs only at “preferred repair shops.” Without this law, insurance companies could continue steering business to certain shops and guaranteeing only repairs made at those shops. How will people know they have a choice? This law will require repair shops to notify vehicle owners on appraisal forms, estimate forms, and customer service area signs that the vehicle owners have the right to choose the licensed repair shop where the damage will be repaired. Vehicle insurance companies will have to provide similar notice on the insurance identification cards they issue to vehicle owners. In addition, if vehicle owners choose to have repairs performed at shops associated with their insurance companies, no repairs may be made without the vehicle owners' written acknowledgement. This is another way to ensure that vehicle owners know they may choose any licensed vehicle repair shop. Effective January 1, 2009 PA 08-146