

CAPITOL UPDATE 2012

Education Reform

The state's commitment to education is strong. The landmark education reform bill (SB 458) included an additional \$50 million in education funding for public schools across the state – yielding an additional \$294,833 for Wethersfield.

The Wethersfield Town Council and Board of Ed recently approved a strong local education budget that includes important new initiatives like all-day kindergarten. The additional state funding will help cover the costs associated with our town's investment in young children.

The education bill contains funding increases for vocational schools, charter schools and magnet schools as well as the creation of a new kindergarten through 8th grade science initiative and 1,000 school readiness slots for preschoolers.

Price Gouging and Pain at the Pump

Skyrocketing gasoline prices are a result of global factors such as growing demand from expanding economies such as China, turmoil in the Middle East and oil market speculators. So, what can Connecticut do to help ease the pain at the pump? The unfortunate truth is: not much, but we have a responsibility to try. Faced with that reality, the legislature acted in a bipartisan manner to cap the petroleum gross receipts tax (GRT) on motor fuels and enact new price gouging laws to protect consumers from oil companies and gasoline dealers that try to exploit abnormal market conditions for profit.



Dear Neighbor:

This year the Legislature worked closely with Governor Dannel Malloy to enact important legislation. The education bill that was signed into law will be beneficial to not only our state but to Wethersfield. With increased education funding and the tools to better evaluate and improve our schools, students will have more opportunities and our property taxpayers won't have to shoulder the entire load.

As House Chair of the Legislature's Government Administration and Elections Committee, I was able to work with my colleagues to pass legislation that will make Connecticut a leader in clean elections, ensuring that Super PAC's and corporations will have to disclose where their funds are coming from when spent on campaigns. We also continued last year's consolidation efforts by eliminating over 20 state boards and commissions.

There is always much to do, and we must continue to partner with the business community as well as our cities and towns as we strive to provide the best services while being more efficient. I appreciate and welcome your input.

Sincerely,



State Representative

RUSSELL A. MORIN

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Rep. Morin speaking at a press conference

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State Representative **RUSSELL A. MORIN**

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Caylee's Law

Sets criminal penalties for the failure to report the disappearance of a child. The law is in response to the circumstances surrounding the death of Florida toddler Caylee Anthony, and applies to any parent, guardian or person who has custody or supervision of the child. The hope is to alert authorities as quickly as possible in order to get our children back safely.

Jobs

We created new job opportunities for young people by funding the Youth Employment Summer Jobs program. We also supported adult evening education programs, as well as the Small Business Express program and a Connecticut Made initiative to promote products from local businesses. Additional, high level job opportunities will result from economic development funding for the Jackson Labs project that builds on our decision to become a world leader in bioscience and biotechnology.

Move Over Law

This year we strengthened the State's Move Over Law. Now you have to slow down and move over one lane on all state roads when there is police activity, DOT work or a disabled vehicle on the shoulder of the road.

Domestic Violence

We have made great progress in helping families affected by domestic violence in recent years, but the problem persists in our communities. Building on earlier successes, this year we strengthened the state's laws to better protect victims, hold abusers accountable, and give new tools to law enforcement.



Veterans and Service Members

We passed legislation this year that will help our veterans. Like preventing a court from entering a final custody order modifying parental rights while they are deployed. The last thing a soldier needs is the added anxiety of someone trying to take custody of their children while they are fighting for our country. In addition, we now require the Department of Veterans' Affairs to publish a list of qualified veterans' charitable organizations to prevent scam-artists from using fraudulent charities to target people who think they are helping veterans. We also increased the penalties for the intentional desecration of war or veterans' memorials.



[Rep. Morin meeting with Majority Leader Sharkey on the floor of the House](#)

Seniors

Protecting the quality of life for our senior citizens is an important responsibility. This year we focused on healthcare and grandparents' rights.

GRANDPARENTS' RIGHTS - This new law enhances the rights of grandparents seeking visitation rights by putting extra weight on evidence showing a parent-like relationship exists and that a denial of visitation rights could cause harm to the child.

HOSPICE CARE - With just two licensed hospices in the state, this new law will give smaller hospice facilities the opportunity to provide high quality services and allow patients to stay closer to family and friends.

PRESERVING MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY - This legislation ensured thousands of seniors and people with disabilities could continue to use the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to help pay for their Medicare co-pays and deductibles by raising the income limit for MSP.

Accountability and Transparency in Elections

We need to maintain the integrity of our elections. In a time where rich special interests can have too much influence in elections we made sure corporate money could not continue to flood campaigns without increased transparency.

A 2010 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court held that the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibited the government from restricting independent political expenditures by corporations. The decision has led to the proliferation of corporate donations and of so-called Super PACs - which dispense millions of dollars to influence voters without disclosing the names of their donors.

HB 5556, An Act Concerning Changes to the Public Financing Act and Other Election Laws requires any entity - whether PAC or corporation - making an independent campaign-related expenditure or independent political ad to list the names of their top donors.

Tropical Storm Irene and October Nor'easter

In the aftermath of the October Nor'easter and Tropical Storm Irene that left much of the state without power, the legislature passed sweeping reforms to better prepare for future severe storms and avoid wide spread and lengthy loss of utility service, where:

- Utilities will be held to minimum performance standards for emergency preparation and response
- Noncompliance could result in penalties of up to 2.5 percent of an electric or gas company's annual distribution revenue, approximately \$25 million in the case of Connecticut Light & Power

Sewage Spill Alerts

Wethersfield Cove has taught us a painful lesson about sewage spills. They can impact the health and property of residents as well as take an environmental toll on our waterways and beaches. Spill alerts will now occur for breaches at sewage treatment plants, whether caused by storm overflow or operational problems. The new law establishes a process to inform the public whenever a sewage spill occurs by requiring the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to post information on sewage spills on their website.