

# CAPITOL UPDATE 2012

## Seniors

Protecting the quality of life for our senior citizens is a top priority. This year the legislature focused on healthcare and grandparents' rights.

- Grandparents Rights - Family relationships are complicated and grandparents can sometimes be separated from their grandchildren's lives particularly when divorce or disagreements occur. This new law helps grandparents seeking visitation rights by providing guidance on evidence showing a parent-like relationship exists and that a denial of visitation rights could cause harm to the child. Decisions should be made in a child's best interests and this legislation helps do that.
- Hospice Care - With just two licensed hospices in the state, this new law will permit hospices to follow federal standards, giving smaller hospice facilities the opportunity to provide high quality services that allow patients to stay closer to family and friends. This bill will help our state to ensure that residents have access to health care services across the full continuum of care.
- Preserving Medicaid 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 to accommodate a 3.6 percent Social Security cost of living increase (COLA) which took effect January 1. It would have been a tragic irony if a welcome increase in Social Security made some Connecticut residents ineligible for these Medicare benefits.

I am proud to support these and other initiatives for our seniors. After working throughout their lives and contributing to society, seniors deserve our respect and assistance to help them enjoy their later years.



### Dear Neighbor:

From jobs to education to improved response to natural disasters, the legislature helped citizens across our state in many ways in 2012.

It started last October when we passed comprehensive, bipartisan jobs legislation that invested hundreds of millions of dollars in small businesses, gave firms hiring incentives, aligned education programs with jobs-in-demand, encouraged entrepreneurship and innovation, and eliminated red-tape for growing companies.

This spring, we balanced a budget by keeping our funding promise to cities and towns without raising taxes. Historic changes were made to our educational system so our children can succeed. We made it easier for people to exercise voting rights, and demanded that utility companies respond better when storms and crises hit. We repealed a death penalty law that wasn't working, and further protected victims of domestic violence.

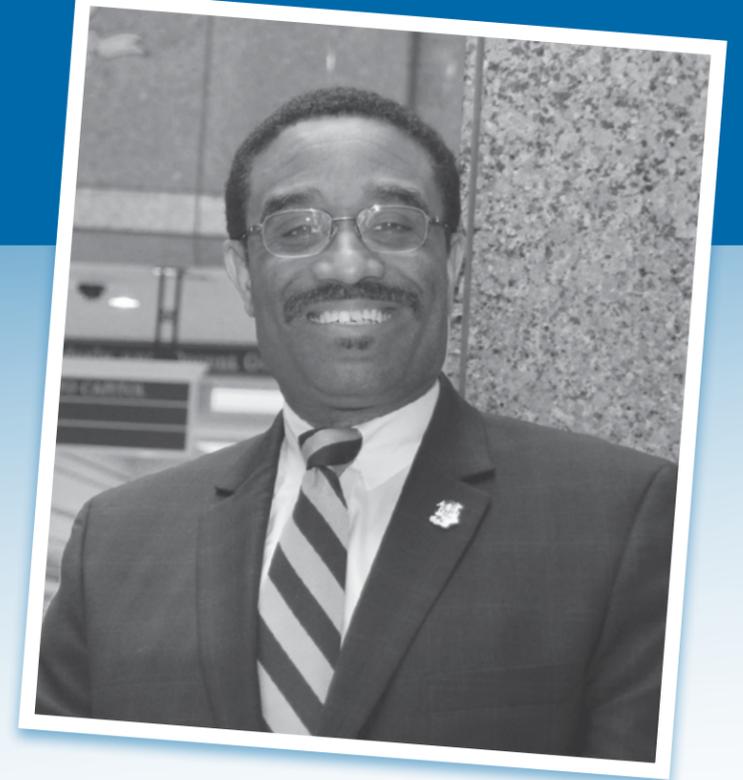
We helped children with special needs by improving Individualized Education Plans and creating a study on workforce development, training and employment of young adults with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

I am proud to have supported a budget that includes \$14,153,298 in state funding for Norwalk, including funding for education and vital services to help stabilize our property taxes.

I hope this report is informative. I'm happy to answer any questions about these issues or any others facing our state or your family. Together we can create a better future for our families.

Sincerely,

*Rep. Bruce V. Morris*



## State Representative **BRUCE V. MORRIS**

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**Bruce V. Morris**

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*Rep. Morris discussing legislation with Rep. Tercyak in House chambers.*

## Jobs are Priority #1

We continued the state’s commitment to job growth and economic recovery with new legislation during special session that expands the Small Business Express Program, allowing an estimated 3,600 additional businesses to have access to state funding. The program allows small businesses to access much-needed funding for capital investments and hiring. In addition, the bill:

- Establishes the Unemployed Armed Forces Member STEP-UP program with grants to subsidize the cost of hiring unemployed veterans during their first 180 days on the job.
- Creates the “Connecticut Made” and “Connecticut Treasures” programs to promote products made in Connecticut and promote the state’s cultural, educational and historic attractions.
- Develops a plan to allow the state to give preferential incentives and economic development assistance to companies that will relocate jobs from overseas to Connecticut.

We created new job opportunities for young people by funding the Youth Employment Summer Jobs program, and expanded adult evening education programs.

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.

We recognize the challenges facing cities and towns and secured funding for municipalities, relieving pressure on local property taxes.

## Let’s Keep In Touch In A Green Way

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# JOB GROWTH

## “No-excuse” Absentee Balloting and Early Voting

- Increased voter turnout and participation builds a stronger democracy with each vote cast. That’s why we took the first steps to amending the State Constitution to allow “no-excuse” absentee ballots and early voting.
- Incredibly, our State Constitution currently prevents us from making absentee voting easier for men and women in uniform, caregivers or even working parents with busy schedules. When people have more flexible voting options and access to absentee ballots without providing a reason, more votes get cast and counted on Election Night.
- According to the Office of the Secretary of the State, 35 states that have implemented early voting or no-excuse absentee ballots have experienced higher voter turnout and less confusion for election officials on Election Day.



*Rep. Morris with Governor Malloy and Martin Luther King III.*

### Norwalk Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Aid

PILOT: State Owned Property	\$344,163
PILOT: Colleges & Hospitals	\$1,633,256
Town Aid Roads	\$436,988
Local Capital Improvement Program	\$625,905
Pequot/Mohegan Aid	\$862,213
Adult Education	\$83,819
School Transportation	\$71,823
Educational Cost Sharing	\$10,095,131

### Total State Funds to Norwalk & the 140<sup>th</sup> District

**\$14,153,298**

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Reducing 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 by:

- Improving access to and enforcement of protective and restraining orders
- Allowing victims to report email and texting violations of restraining and protective orders in the town where they reside, where they receive the communication or where the communication was initiated
- Requiring the courts to share protective orders with schools that victims attend, upon request of a victim
- Strengthening the definition of stalking to ensure that stalking incidents—including digital stalking—are appropriately punished

## Price Gouging & 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 Middle East and oil market speculators. Faced with the reality of a global dilemma, the legislature acted in a bipartisan manner to be a part of the solution, by capping the state petroleum gross receipts tax (GRT) on motor fuels and enacting new price gouging laws to protect consumers from oil companies and gasoline dealers that try to exploit abnormal market conditions for profit.

## Capital Punishment Repeal

I am proud to support the capital punishment repeal which makes Connecticut the 17th state to eliminate capital punishment, replacing the death penalty with a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole. The new law does not apply to murderers already on death row.

## Racial Profiling

Too many individuals in our communities continue to suffer from bias based on their appearance. This bill strengthens an existing law aimed at stopping police from profiling motorists based on race during traffic stops.



*Rep. Morris with Norwalk delegation fighting for more school funding (ECS).*