

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

BRUCE V. MORRIS

PROUDLY SERVING THE 140TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT | NORWALK

Dear Neighbor,

We have recently seen some favorable signs of recovery for our economy and the state budget, but if even one person is still looking for a job or facing financial difficulty, we still have work to do. Part of that task includes making government more efficient while also ensuring the protection of our most vulnerable citizens by keeping essential services properly funded.

As we worked through the 2014 legislative session, one of my top priorities was to determine how we can best continue to spur on our recovering economy and help those who need it most.

Other legislative initiatives I championed included streamlining the foreclosure process and giving adults who were adopted in childhood the right to see their own birth records.

All of the issues I've mentioned are outlined and explored in depth on the following page. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with your ideas and any concerns you may have.

Sincerely,



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
BRUCE V. MORRIS
PROUDLY SERVING THE 140TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT | NORWALK
CAPITOL UPDATE 2014

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BRUCE V. MORRIS

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Rep. Morris speaks during Taiwan Day at the State Capital

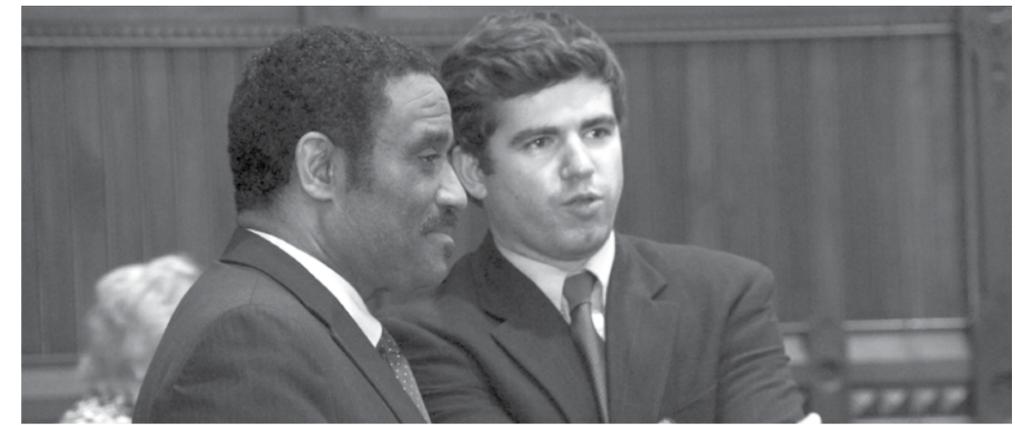


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Rep. Morris assisting his intern John Jongbloed who is a student at Trinity College

CONSUMER PROTECTION FOR ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS

This year we added much-needed transparency to an issue that we heard about from many state residents regarding predatory energy providers and confusing energy bills.

A state market analysis released in March by the Office of Consumer Counsel estimated Connecticut consumers were overpaying for electricity by an estimated \$13.7 million a month. Many consumers, who counted on paying less for energy after signing up for low introductory rates from suppliers, soon discovered that their rates jumped and they were paying more.

Energy suppliers will now be prohibited from offering consumers short-term “teaser” energy contracts with low rates, then switching to much higher variable rate contracts within weeks. Termination fees would be capped at \$50 under the law, and a consumer could switch back to the standard rate charged by UI or CL&P within 72 hours.

More transparent billing practices and faster switching, so a customer can fire a company quickly and easily, and prohibitions of coercive and deceptive sales practices, will empower consumers.



INCREASING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

One critical way to improve the mental health system in this state is to increase access to mental health services. Individuals will now be able to receive mental health services in locations outside of licensed clinics. The more convenient we can make it for sufferers of mental illness to receive care, the more likely they are to get the help they need.

PROTECTING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Sometimes offenders who commit domestic violence or other acts against their family or spouses retaliate financially when their victims request a restraining order. To help prevent this, courts may now grant financial orders as part of the civil restraining order process. This change would permit the courts, among other things, to order the offender to maintain utilities and insurance for their victims. We also increased the penalty for criminal violation of restraining orders, protective orders and standing criminal protective orders involving such actions as threatening, harassing and assault from a class D to a class C felony.

SAFETY ZONES FOR SENIORS

Increasingly, our seniors are becoming victims of crimes, including sex crimes. We need to do everything we can to help protect them. This year we created a task force that will study how to keep registered sex offenders away from our seniors. The task force will study the establishment of senior safety zones, how to keep sex offenders away from public facilities that seniors use and will analyze data regarding protecting seniors from sex offenders in their own homes.



INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE

We recently increased the minimum wage to \$10.10, effective by 2017. This boost in income will appear gradually in three stages with the minimum wage rising to \$9.15 on January 1, 2015, \$9.60 on January 2, 2016, and finally to \$10.10 on January 1, 2017. The increase will raise the standard of living for thousands of hard-working families in Connecticut struggling to make ends meet and put those dollars back into our local economy, helping small businesses in our neighborhoods. Studies show that workers earning the minimum wage spend nearly their entire paycheck with local businesses on basic living expenses, including groceries. Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass a law to raise the minimum wage above \$10 an hour.

HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED CARE FOR THE ELDERLY AND PERSONS WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Several studies have been conducted over the past few years looking into issues that concern seniors and persons with Alzheimer's disease. This year we authorized a study of private funding sources for home and community based care, for the elderly and those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. The Commission on Aging will conduct this study whose goal is to identify the availability of state-funded home and community-based care and the cost effectiveness of those programs. The report is due back to the Aging Committee by January 1, 2015.