



Dear Friends;

It took awhile for the legislature to work out a bonding compromise with the Governor, but the special session has just ended with an agreement. Among the winners is the local American Red Cross, whose funding survived the negotiations.

In the regular session, we made strides in addressing health care funding and energy conservation, and Wallingford got an increase in education and other town aid. More residents have health care today. We finally fixed the uncertainty in the Teachers' Retirement Fund, and enhanced protection for the property owners threatened by eminent domain. We expanded respite care for people under age 65 who might be affected by Alzheimer's disease. We even changed civil preparedness plans to include provisions for evacuating pets along with their owners.

For 2008 we have begun working on a stakeholder process to reach universal, affordable health care coverage. In the meantime, please take advantage of the Meriden Health Center at 134 State Street in Meriden (phone#: 237-2229) if you know someone who needs health care. I am also participating in a Peak Oil Caucus to prepare a response to energy disruptions.

Constituent concerns do result in action. I am committed to working with you on the challenges that face us. If you have a question or concern, please call me at home, 269-8378, or at my Capitol office, 1-800-842-8267.

Sincerely,

Mary Mushinsky

Mary Mushinsky
State Representative

Useful Numbers

- Veterans' Benefits and Information 1-800-827-1000
- ConnPACE..... 1-800-423-5026
- Infoline211
- Healthcare Advocate..... 1-866-HMO-4446
- Area Agency on Aging (203)-752-3059
- Non-Senior Fuel Assistance (Youth and Social Services)..... 294-2175
- Wallingford Senior Center/Fuel Assistance 265-7753
- Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance Hotline 1-(877)-472-8313



2007 Legislative Report

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CALL ME FOR YOUR COPY OF:

- 2007 Senior Laws
- 2007 Education Laws
- 2007 Major Public Acts
- 2007 Laws Affecting Children
- 2007 Laws Affecting Businesses

Representative Mary Mushinsky

Legislative Office Building, Room 4038
Hartford, CT 06106

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State Representative Mary Mushinsky



Reports on the 2007 Legislative Session

Autumn 2007

HEALTH CARE (PA 07-185)

HealthFirst CT and Healthy Kids Initiatives:

Makes several improvements to our current health care system in an effort to expand access to quality, affordable health care. These improvements include:



- Expansion of public programs, like HUSKY, to more children and adults and the establishment of a broad outreach program to get all eligible individuals enrolled.
- State commitments to public health data collection and secure electronic health records to address the health of our communities, reduce duplication in testing, reduce errors, improve quality and lower costs.
- Needed funding for community-based care, including school-based health centers and federally qualified health centers, and for transportation to and from medical appointments.
- Rate increases for health providers through the Medicaid program.
- Increased options for health care for young adults and small employers.
- Two authorities established to move the state toward universal health care for all residents.

ENERGY (PA 07-242)

Electricity and Energy Efficiency:

- Expands green building requirements for state facilities and school construction projects and provides increased funding for projects.
- Requires the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to develop a plan to improve energy management in state facilities.
- Extends and expands sales tax exemptions for energy efficiency products.
- Expands funding for distributed-generation projects, such as micro-turbines and fuel cells.
- Increases the proportion of the state's power requirements that must come from renewable sources.
- Requires electric companies to develop a plan to deploy advanced meters.
- Requires the Department of Environmental Protection to auction allowances under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and use the proceeds to fund conservation and other programs that benefit ratepayers.

Especially for Wallingford

Cellular Towers Policy

This legislation requires the Siting Council, by January 2008, to develop a town-specific telecommunications coverage assessment upon the town's request. The assessment must identify locations in the town with bad coverage and analyze current and future coverage demand. Each telecommunications services provider is required to submit this information to the council if it asks.



Towns may now have a greater say in where cell towers are placed. If a town is the proposed site of a tower, it must submit its location preferences or criteria to the Siting Council within 30 days after a tower application is filed with them. As the supervisor of power line construction projects, the Siting Council may now order the

restoration of plant life in the right-of-way paths of overhead power lines, especially in residential areas. (PA 07-22)

Veterans

- **Connecticut National Guard men and women honored**
A new law allows burial in a state veterans cemetery for National Guard members. (PA 07-13)
- **Protecting the careers of those who serve**
Another veteran-friendly law maintains professional licenses for those called to active duty. (PA 07-157)
- **Increased help for Hispanic & Latino veterans**
This law establishes an advocacy position within the Department of Veteran's Affairs exclusively for Latino and Hispanic veterans. (PA 07-97)
- **Respect for funerals**
In recent years, a radical group has engaged in protests at the funerals of members of the US Armed Services. The General Assembly sought to stop these disruptions. Under this law, a protest within 150 feet of the funeral grounds will become a Class A misdemeanor which will be punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both. (PA 07-187)

Budget Highlights

This year, Wallingford will receive \$22,656,810 from state grants. This is \$1,814,934 more than we received last year.

It includes:

- \$20,536,835 for schools
- \$232,057 for adult education
- \$276,624 for roads
- \$300,973 from casino revenue

The Governor's proposal would have provided an additional \$2,449,664 in funding, but that version was paid for by an income tax increase of \$6,108,904 on Wallingford residents that did not pass.

Environmental Initiatives

Recycling Electronic Waste

Making Connecticut greener is easier thanks to a mandatory recycling program for discarded computers and televisions. Each registered manufacturer also must pay recyclers the reasonable costs of transporting and recycling its computers and televisions. Beginning January 1, 2009, computers and television sets must be recycled. (PA 07-189)

Preserving Our Farmland

A 12-member Farmland Preservation Advisory Board may now help the Department of Agriculture purchase rights of development to preserve farms. (PA 07-162)

Expanding Connecticut's Film Industry

Last year we took a historic step in improving our business climate and adding jobs to the state by introducing the film industry to the state. Under the previous bill, Connecticut offered the most competitive film tax credit in the country with a 30% tax credit for film production done within the state. This resulted in films such as "In Bloom" with Uma Thurman and the latest installment of the "Indiana Jones" films with Harrison Ford in New Haven. To build upon this success, we took further steps this year to enhance their credits and bring more film projects to the state. (PA 07-236)

Eminent Domain

A new law makes significant changes to eminent domain laws by setting up limiting rules on when taking can occur, including a prohibition on takings for primarily increasing tax revenues. Takings must be complete in 10 years, and the property owner has the right of first refusal to buy property back if the property is not used for the intent of taking. (PA 07-141) & (PA 07-207)

Encouraging Older Drivers to Remain Safe Drivers

Senior citizens who complete an approved accident prevention course are eligible for an insurance reduction as a result of legislation we passed. This discount is expanded to seniors aged 60 and older, lasts at least two years and is reinstated upon completion of a safe driving course. (PA 07-5)

Protecting Our Children

Child Poverty And Prevention Council

In 2006 we passed a historic bill that created a "2020 Vision" plan that promotes investment in time-tested crisis prevention programs that have been proven successful. The Child Poverty and Prevention Council's role is to recommend policy changes to reduce child poverty 50% by the year 2014 and shift 10% of the spending of state funds on children towards prevention programs. This bill extends those requirements until the expected goal years of 2014 and 2020. It also requires the governor to continue to submit a prevention report in the biennial budget. (PA 07-47)



Connecticut Student Loan Foundation

With students facing higher student loan interest rates and growing student loan debt, we took action enabling the Connecticut Student Loan Foundation to offer student loans at better rates. The Connecticut Student Loan Foundation (CSLF) now is authorized to issue federal tax-exempt bonds, notes or other obligations subject to the private activity cap. CSLF must use the realized savings from issuing tax-exempt bonds to fund borrower benefits. (PA 07-109)

Funding Of Teachers' Retirement System

Citing the need to address the growing unfunded liability in Connecticut's Teachers' Retirement Fund (TRF), we authored a comprehensive proposal that would strengthen the financial footing of the Fund and ultimately save taxpayers money. The plan will save \$2.8 billion, taking advantage of lower interest rates and refinancing to save money. (PA 07-186)

Home Care

In an effort to help people save towards the cost of elderly services and encourage more affordable elderly in-home care, we voted to establish the Connecticut Home Care Option Program for the Elderly and the Connecticut Home Care Trust Fund. This legislation provides a welcome opportunity to many seniors and families to finance costly long term health care while providing seniors with the comfort of being able to stay in their homes.

Program participants establish individual savings accounts with the fund and can make annual contributions to it. A designated beneficiary is permitted to withdraw funds to pay for qualified home care expenses.

Finally, to further encourage home care options, this law removes the cap on the number of participants in the state pilot program for personal care assistants, thus enabling all seniors in need of a personal care assistant the ability to hire one directly. (PA 07-130)