

ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT WOMEN VETERANS' PROGRAM

This year, we passed legislation that recognizes the important sacrifices female veterans have made while defending our country. Beginning October 1st, the Department of Veterans Affairs will be required to conduct outreach regarding benefits and services available for female veterans while taking into account the needs and obstacles women face. The Department will submit an annual report to the legislature recommending new initiatives and detailing which benefits and services would be best for female veterans. It is vital that we protect those who protect us and this legislation is a good way to honor these important women.



IMPROVING RESIDENTIAL SERVICES AT THE VETERANS' HOME IN ROCKY HILL

Since 1940, the Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill has served our vets in need with a range of rehabilitative, medical, and vocational services. A new law implements several recommendations from a 2014 study on the Home, including:

- Residents will have two seats on the Board of Trustees.
- A process will be developed for residents to file complaints.
- No veteran will go without housing should something happen to the Home.
- A plan will be submitted to the General Assembly to implement other recommendations— including more transitional housing and on-campus work programs, and greater privacy for residents.

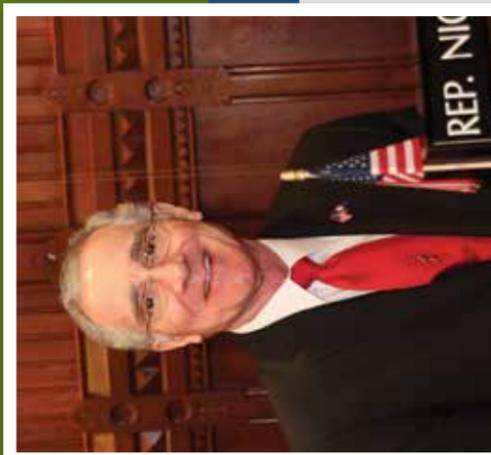
SERVICES AVAILABLE TO VETERANS ON STATE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service members (OASIS) helps members of the Armed Services receive grants and scholarships to purchase items such as pens, notebooks, or flash drives when enrolling in educational programs. The law calls for a study on how Connecticut's colleges and universities could implement the best services and practices into the veterans OASIS program. The goal is to help spread awareness and teach veterans about the benefits and services available to them.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

FRANK N. NICASTRO, SR.

SERVING THE 79TH HOUSE DISTRICT | BRISTOL/FORESTVILLE



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CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

Dear Neighbor,

I am pleased to share with you this update on the recently concluded legislative session.

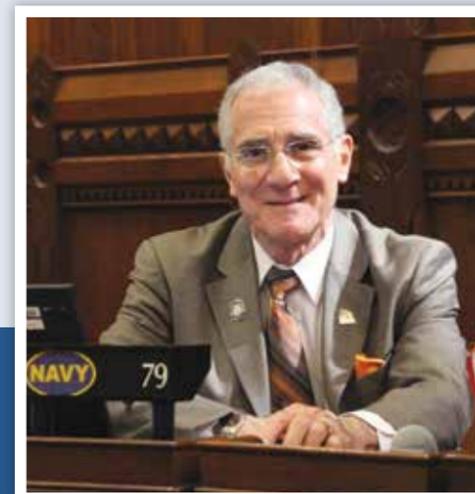
Each year brings a new set of challenges, and the 2015 session was no different. Despite a serious budget deficit and recognizing the need to encourage economic growth, my colleagues and I passed a balanced budget that provides property and car tax relief for middle-class families and small businesses, consumer protections and programs that empower Connecticut's families.

This year, we created a state budget that focused on preserving city and town budgets by increasing public education funding and investing in transportation. Most people will see reductions in their car taxes and most municipalities will see increased funding through property tax reforms. **As a result of this budget, Bristol will see an increase of state aid in the amount of \$218,122 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 and \$2.3 million in FY 2017 as compared to 2015. This additional funding could be used to ease the property tax burden.**

In addition to delivering property and car tax relief, we passed legislation that protects seniors and consumers, and we brought transparency to the rapidly changing health care landscape. In the aftermath of the largest data breach in state history, we set new cybersecurity standards for companies handling residents' personal data.

I hope you find the enclosed information helpful and will feel free to call or email me for any reason. It is my pleasure and honor to serve as your state representative.

Sincerely,



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HOSPITAL TRAINING AND PROCEDURES FOR PATIENTS WITH SUSPECTED DEMENTIA

Connecticut has seen an increase in the number of individuals being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. One of the recommendations from the Alzheimer's Task Force was to provide training for those hospital staff members who provide direct care to patients on how to identify the symptoms of dementia. This will help these staff members know what to look for and how to better treat patients with dementia.

EXTENDING THE FORECLOSURE MEDIATION PROGRAM

The Foreclosure Mediation Program has provided vital services to consumers facing foreclosure, helping many families avoid foreclosure. This year we extended the sunset date of the Foreclosure Mediation Program to July 2019, ensuring that this essential program can continue to function and serve more Connecticut residents.

REDUCING REQUIRED TESTING IN SCHOOLS

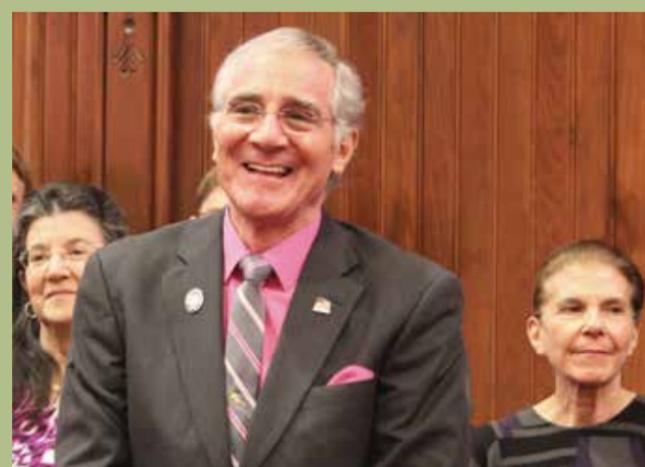
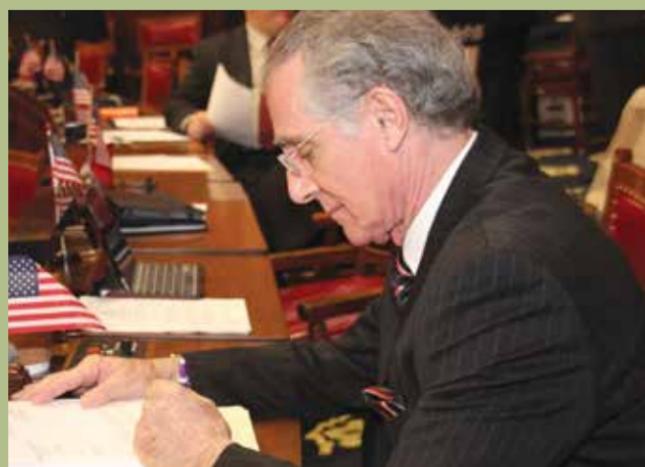
Since the rollout of No Child Left Behind almost 15 years ago, standardized testing has come under a lot of scrutiny. One area of concern is that there are simply too many tests. For example, juniors in high school are currently required to take the SBAC exam at a time when many of them are taking the SAT or ACT college admission tests. As we work statewide and across the country to improve the use of standardized tests, the legislature took another big step forward this year by allowing schools to waive SBAC testing for any students taking these college admissions tests.

BANNING POWDERED ALCOHOL ("PALCOHOL")

In March the FDA approved the sale of powdered alcohol. However many states, including Connecticut, have recognized that powdered alcohol has become all too appealing and convenient to underage drinkers. So-called "palcohol" is easily smuggled into schools and concerts, and some kids even snort it. To combat abuse of this product we have taken this important step to protect our youth. Connecticut along with many other states has now banned the sale and possession of powdered alcohol.

BETTER LABELING ON PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES

To better protect and inform consumers, we are now requiring that pharmacists include with generic drugs the manufacturer's name and the website and telephone number for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's drug safety and reporting program (MedWatch). If the patient is being given a generic drug, the pharmacist must include the brand name on the label. This will help to ensure that patients are aware of what drugs they are taking, where these drugs come from and where to report adverse effects of the drugs.



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STRENGTHENING LAWS AGAINST INVASIONS OF PRIVACY

The ease with which we can share images on the internet can result in far-reaching consequences for victims of voyeurism. This year we bolstered privacy protections for victims of voyeurism and what is commonly known as "revenge porn." We expanded the crime of voyeurism to cover trespassing and "up-skirting". We also required that investigation of these crimes must protect voyeurism victims' names, addresses and identifying information from being made public. Finally, recognizing that victims of "revenge porn" suffer reputational and psychological harm when their intimate images are distributed without their consent, we designated a new crime: "unlawful dissemination of an intimate image," a Class A misdemeanor.

REDUCING HEALTH CARE COSTS TO CONNECTICUT CITIES AND TOWNS

Allowing municipal employees and retirees to join state employee health plans will considerably reduce health care costs for towns and cities around our state. Health care costs are reduced because employees from participating towns would join a shared risk pool with state employees and other participating towns. The State Comptroller will be required to offer this coverage to towns and cities and to undertake certain actions to ensure that coverage is maintained.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM LEAD POISONING

The effects of lead poisoning on children are lasting and can be devastating. Based on updated guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we lowered the threshold of blood lead levels at which local health directors must inform parents or guardians about a particular child's eligibility for the Birth-to-Three program, as well as the dangers of lead poisoning, methods of risk reduction, and lead abatement laws. The Birth-to-Three program assists Connecticut's families in meeting the developmental and health-related needs of their infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities.

REDUCING PESTICIDE USE AROUND CHILDREN

Children are particularly vulnerable to the health risks of pesticides. Connecticut has taken a proactive approach in dealing with these harmful chemicals by banning the use of pesticides on many municipal spaces. School websites and social media will be used to notify parents and students of an application of pesticides at least 24 hours before it's applied. Safer alternatives to using pesticides will be encouraged as well as the implementation of integrated pest management solutions.

PROHIBITING THE IMPORT AND SALE OF COSMETICS THAT CONTAIN MICROBEADS

Microbeads are becoming a huge problem for our state's waterways, fish and crustaceans. They are found in a wide range of cosmetics, and are finding their way into our ecosystem. To combat this growing issue we have banned the use of microbeads, promoted the use of alternatives, and allowed industries time to study the potential use of biodegradable products rather than the harmful beads currently being used. The ban will be phased in beginning in 2018.