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Designation of the Eightmile River Watershed



Rep. Orange with the Governor, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, area representatives, senators, and selectmen at the Eightmile River bill signing.

I worked very hard with my colleagues this session for the passage of the Eightmile River bill. This bill declares it state policy that the portion of the Eightmile River Watershed being studied for designation as a national Wild and Scenic River be preserved according to the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It requires the Commissioner of the State Department of Environmental Protection cooperate with state, federal, and local agencies to provide for such a designation and implement any management plan developed according to the federal act. Upon congressional designation of the Eightmile River as a Wild and Scenic River, the commissioner must notify the Environment Committee of any changes in the law required to preserve the river under the federal act.
PA 05-18

Legislative Office Building, Room 4029
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Please Keep in Touch
Capitol: 860.240.8585
Home: 537-3936
Toll-free: 1-800-842-1902
email: linda.orange@cga.ct.gov
www.cga.ct.gov



Linda Orange
state representative
48th District

State Representative

Linda Orange



2005 End of Session Report

Dear Neighbor,

It has been an honor and a privilege to represent the 48th District this legislative session. In this newsletter you will find information on many pieces of legislation we were able to pass this legislative session.

In this budget we were able to add an additional \$750,000 from the surplus for the "Save the Sub Base" effort for a total of \$1.5 million, while still providing additional funding to the towns. We were also able to preserve state funding for many of our most popular tourist attractions. In addition, I helped to secure \$500,000 in bonding funds for repair of the Lyman Viaduct as well as a \$75,000 reimbursement to the town of East Haddam for the cleanup of the town garage over the past 12 years.

I assure you I will continue to pursue other legislative priorities that are important to our towns, namely protecting our environment, funding education, and health and social services. The rapid growth of our towns has shown us how essential it is to provide the necessary services while maintaining our rural quality of life.

Included in this newsletter are highlights of the 2005 legislative session. Your concerns are essential to our decision-making process and I look forward to hearing from you with any questions or concerns you may have.

Working for Colchester & East Haddam

END OF SESSION REPORT



Rep. Orange with Speaker of the House Jim Amann, Rep. Betty Boukus and Margaret Lee at the presentation of Connecticut's Finest Award to Dr. Henry Lee in the House Chamber.

DEPLETED URANIUM

There has been growing concern from the veteran community, especially from those who have served in the Persian Gulf War, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, regarding the health effects of exposure to depleted uranium. The Department of Defense uses depleted uranium in armor piercing ammunition. The state will help eligible guardsmen and veterans get properly tested, if there is reason to believe the personnel have had exposure to depleted uranium. This is a federally paid for screening and won't use any state funds.

To further study the effects of exposure to depleted uranium and other hazardous materials, the General Assembly created a Hazardous Material Task Force. The charge of the task force is to study the effects of exposure to hazardous materials, create a registry of personnel that may have been exposed since 1990, develop a plan of outreach, and prepare a report for service members who may have been exposed.

IDENTITY THEFT

This bill brings state privacy law in line with the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act. Potential victims of identity theft will be able to obtain important bank information from financial records in which all or some of the fraudulent activity may have taken place. As technology evolves, the problem becomes more insidious, but this legislation will take several steps toward providing constituents with protections from identity theft. PA 05-62

CREATING THE OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS AND THE CITIZEN'S ETHICS ADVISORY BOARD

In order to more effectively address ethics concerns and promote ethical behavior, the General Assembly voted to start fresh and create the Office of State Ethics and the nine-member Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board as the successor to the State Ethics Commission. The new structure of the OSE divides the office into a legal and enforcement division with a separate executive director, ethics enforcement officer and general counsel as it both administers, educates on, and enforces the Code of Ethics for Public Officials and Code of Ethics for Lobbyists. In this new organization, the enforcement division will investigate complaints filed and initiated by the Citizen's Advisory Board. All probable cause hearings and determinations will be brought before a judge trial referee. Now, two-thirds of board members present and voting are needed to find an ethics violation and impose penalties. Finally, the bill provides that all new staff fill the new organization's positions. PA 05-183

UNUSED GIFT CARDS

In Connecticut, gift cards are becoming a major way of doing business. Most consumers were probably unaware that Connecticut could legally seize the value of unclaimed gift cards and certificates after three years. With the passage of the "Gift Card" act the state no longer can keep unclaimed gift cards. This is a victory for all consumers.

Currently, the law considers most types of property abandoned if the owner fails to claim it after three years. This act (1) exempts the value of gift cards from the law; (2) eliminates the current law that explicitly states that the value of an unredeemed gift card is presumed abandoned three years after the purchase date or its last use, whichever is later; and (3) eliminates the requirement that gift card sellers obtain and keep the purchaser's address.

It also forgives holders of abandoned property from liability to the state for interest or penalty if they failed to report or deliver abandoned gift certificates to the state treasurer before August 16, 2003. PA 05-189

PESTICIDES AT DAY CARE FACILITIES

State lawmakers took significant action to protect children's health, by restricting the use of lawn care pesticides at public and private preschools and elementary schools, and at child day care centers and group day care homes. The vulnerable, developing organs and nervous systems of children can be put at serious risk from unnecessary exposure to the chemical substances found in pesticides and insecticides. The legislation makes exceptions to the prohibition on the application of pesticides in instances in which they are necessary to eliminate an immediate threat to human health, which includes mosquitoes, ticks, poison ivy, and stinging insects. PA 05-252

FARM LAND PRESERVATION, LAND PROTECTION, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The General Assembly passed legislation that provides funding for farmland preservation programs and existing programs, including affordable housing, open space acquisition, and historic preservation. The funding is generated by a \$30 fee collected by towns for each document they record in their land records, of which the municipality keeps \$3 to fund capital improvement projects. This legislation also extends the current property tax exemption to up to \$100,000 of the assessed value for agricultural buildings housing seasonal agricultural employees. PA 05-228

ACCURATE POSTING OF GAS PRICES

Legislation passed this year by the General Assembly requires customer clubs or organizations that sell gasoline to the general public to post prices in the same manner for members and non-members. In an effort to draw customers, some club retailers prominently display discounted prices available only to members. Given the recent spike in gas prices, the bill seeks to ensure that consumers have accurate information needed to make informed choices. The new law is effective immediately. PA 05-89

HOMELAND SECURITY & PUBLIC SAFETY



Rep. Orange visiting the Connecticut Air National Guard at Bradley International Airport.

This year the Speaker of the House appointed me the Chair of the Appropriations Sub-Committee on Regulation and Protection. This has given me the opportunity to visit many of the sites in Connecticut protected by Homeland Security including the FBI, the Coast Guard and Homeland Security Offices.

I am pleased to inform you that we were able to fund Homeland Security as its own separate agency. It is no longer a part of the Department of Public Safety. We were also able to fund a state trooper class of 38 and boost access to higher education for enlisted soldiers by allowing active military duty personnel stationed in Connecticut the ability to qualify for in-state tuition to our state and technical colleges.

Questions ~ Concerns?

Call State Rep. Linda Orange at 1-800-842-1902