

Rep. Orange greets former Major League Baseball star "Rusty" Staub, also known as "Le Grande Orange."



Eminent Domain: We made an effort to balance individual property rights with a town's need to grow its tax base. A town may still take land by eminent domain but there are more barriers to do so and property owners have a greater chance of redress.

Approving the taking of land for economic development now requires a two-thirds vote by a town's legislative body, a report explaining the public benefits, and payment of 125 percent of the average of two appraisals for the property. It also allows court appeals of land takings and gives former owners first right to buy back a property if a development project is not completed.



This legislation creates the office of Property Rights Ombudsman that can undertake a feasibility study to determine the value and impact of "goodwill," which refers to relocation assistance and potential loss of business due to relocation.

Senior Driving Insurance Discount: Drivers aged 60 and up are now eligible for an automobile insurance policy premium discount after successfully completing a Department of Motor Vehicles approved accident prevention course. It is a great opportunity to stay safe and save money. For more information, contact the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Invasive Plants: Money was included in the budget to help communities control invasive plants in public lands and waters. The dollars will be used to develop a rapid response policy and to hire a coordinator to educate the public and run the program.



Farmland Preservation: This legislation creates a loan program to help towns purchase agricultural land. The loan cannot exceed five years, and there is no interest. Not only is this a means of preserving agriculture, it protects it too!



Veteran Funerals: Any protest at the funeral of a veteran will be a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both. Protesters must stay at least 150 ft. away from any part of the ceremony. Honor is the only demonstration that should be present at our veterans' funerals.



Consumer Protections:

- A creditor who uses abusive, harassing, fraudulent, or misleading practices to collect or attempt to collect a debt is now liable for damages.
- Black box recorder data in cars cannot be used against the owner, renter or lessee of the car.

Dear Neighbors,

I am pleased to share with you a small sample of this year's legislative accomplishments.

Without a tax increase, we were able to help our towns by providing more money for education, town roads and local projects. This includes bond money for restoring the girls' softball field in East Haddam and giving an emergency upgrade to Colchester's water treatment plant on Taintor Hill Road. I encourage you to take a look inside and find out what the state has been doing to help reduce the tax burden on its towns.

I have spoken with many of you this year, and your letters, e-mail and phone calls do help me know your concerns and how to address them. Together, we can make life better in the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for allowing me to represent the 48th Assembly District of Colchester and East Haddam/Moodus. It is an honor and true privilege.

Sincerely,

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Colchester and East Haddam / Moodus

Under the state's new two-year budget, towns will continue to receive money to offset the need for local taxes. Our district will see **\$17,912,092** in state grants for this coming year and **\$18,639,764** in Fiscal Year 08-09. Overall state aid to towns swells by **\$221.3 million** for the upcoming fiscal year and an additional **\$131.5 million** for FY 09.

STATE BONDS FOR THE TOWNS

\$50,000 for East Haddam girls' softball field restorations

\$2,600,000 to the Colchester Sewer and Water Commission for urgent pump and treatment plant upgrade and land transfer

Also:

- A new \$10 million fund has been created to help to update and repair the state's existing public housing stock.
- Southeastern Connecticut will receive additional support in efforts organize a homeland security industry cluster. The cluster will examine state regulations and policies and propose ways to boost homeland security industries.



FIREFIGHTER TRAINING

The Connecticut General Assembly, realizing the high cost of training our paid and volunteer firefighters, will now be reimbursing municipalities and state agencies for one-half the cost of Firefighter I and recruit training. Firefighters who are paid personnel must be certified as Firefighter I and II, which are their entry level criteria. Volunteer personnel must be certified as Firefighter I prior to being able to enter a burning building.



FOSTERING PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

For the first time in years, the Educational Cost Sharing foundation was increased from \$5,891 to \$9,687 per student, thus increasing the ECS grant to all towns. In addition to the foundation increase, the minimum grant was raised from 6% to 9% of the foundation for the majority of districts. Towns that do not achieve adequate yearly progress in schools are required to add twenty percentage points to the ECS share that must be spent on education.



Call me for your free copy of “2007 Major Public Acts,” or if you are interested in specifics, “2007 Laws Affecting...”

- Business
 - Environment
 - Seniors
 - Taxes
- Children
 - Land Use
 - Veterans
 - Health Professions
- Education
 - Municipalities

THE STATE BUDGET & TAX PACKAGE

\$ Total 2008 State Budget - \$17.6 billion
 \$ Total 2009 State Budget - \$18.4 billion

\$ Much of the current state budget surplus of about \$1 billion is being used to help pay down long term debt, pay off bonds and increase the balance in the state’s ‘rainy day’ reserve fund.

\$ \$5 million will fund a statewide energy efficiency program at the DPUC.

\$ \$5 million will go to Operation Fuel for heating assistance.

\$ There is a \$336 million increase over two years in healthcare funding. It is aimed at increasing coverage and access for the uninsured, mainly for children through the existing state HUSKY program. The cornerstone of the plan involves automatic enrollment for newborns, expanded eligibility, school-based health clinics and higher Medicaid reimbursement for doctors.

\$ \$39 million will be provided to nursing homes for a 2.9% rate increase for next fiscal year.

\$ Beginning in FY09, a new division of Autism Spectrum Disorders will be created within the new Department of Developmental Services (formerly Department of Mental Retardation).

\$ Connecticut’s two higher education grant programs have received a tremendous influx of new funds, allowing for many more Connecticut residents to have the opportunity to attend college in the state. The budget sets aside \$27.2 million over two years for grants to students attending public colleges and \$16.2 million over two years for students attending private colleges.

\$ Over the next two years over \$2 million in new funding will be put into expanding after school programs.

\$ Exemptions/Credits:
 - Weatherization products are exempted from the sales tax.
 - Vehicles that get greater than 40 mpg are exempted from the sales tax.
 - Rehabilitation of historic mixed-use structures is now eligible for a tax credit.
 - The state’s tax credit program for the film industry was expanded. This time, it provides tax credits for capital projects, such as new studio space for film and digital media.



CHOICES HEALTH INSURANCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The CHOICES program has recently played a crucial role in assisting many aging people throughout the state. The CHOICES program now provides information and assistance as well as eligibility screening for many federal and state programs and services, including long-term care and Medicare Part D, to older adults, persons with disabilities, their families, and professionals. This law expands the role of the Department of Social Services’ CHOICES program in publicizing information and providing advice to Medicare beneficiaries. The law also requires CHOICES to develop consumer-oriented websites that provide information on Medicare plans, including Medicare Part D plans and available long-term care options. Call CHOICES at 1-800-994-9422 to speak with a counselor in your area.



State Representatives from the Southeastern Delegation participate in a ground breaking ceremony at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich.

CONNECTICUT’S SMART GROWTH INITIATIVE

Smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. New smart growth is more town-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and many other environmental amenities.

This law will also help municipalities save money by encouraging regional shared services. The Regional Performance Incentive Program offers grants to proposals for a joint provision of a service that is currently provided by an individual municipality. The proposals must include a service which increases municipalities’ purchasing power, or provides a cost savings which lowers property taxes. For additional tax relief, the Office of Policy and Management will study and recommend regional tax-based revenue sharing programs, and the creation of regional asset districts.



Colchester’s Bacon Academy:

The portable classrooms in Colchester’s Bacon Academy were exempted from meeting certain statewide acoustical standards by “grandfathering” them into compliance. The modular units have been in use for 9 years, and were moved to Bacon Academy to help with overcrowding. Portable classrooms were not considered when the acoustical law was passed, and there is little chance that they would meet this standard otherwise.

Dog Bites:

In response to a drawn-out string of animal attacks by the same dog, an area neighborhood petitioned me to demand action. I sponsored legislation to give animal control officers greater discretion to act when facing a dangerous animal. The officers are now equipped with more options for action, and that lowers the likelihood of repeat attacks.

Residents have the right to be able to walk their pets without fearing for their safety. This act was a great example of what can happen when a group of concerned citizens band together for a common cause.

TOWNS HELPING TOWNS

The General Assembly has passed legislation creating an Intrastate Mutual Aid System. Towns now can enter into agreements with their neighboring towns and share critical resources such as fire, police, and ambulances to better respond to crises that threaten the safety of its residents. Towns also are able to conduct training missions with neighboring towns so that in the event aid is needed, the departments involved would have a familiar working knowledge of each other’s capabilities.

PUBLIC SAFETY

• Trafficking in persons impacts nearly 15,000 people a year in the United States, and is also a serious problem in Connecticut. The General Assembly established a 26-member council to recommend ways to strengthen state and local efforts to prevent people trafficking, protect trafficking victims, and prosecute traffickers. The Office of Victim Services will develop a coordinated response system.



• This year we adopted a model missing persons act. It improves the ability of law enforcement agencies to locate and return missing persons, improve the identification of human remains and improve timely information and notification to the family members of missing persons.

• The General Assembly strengthened the state policy addressing school bullying. It seeks to eliminate bullying and provide students with a safe, respectful environment in which to learn.

• Connecticut was one of only three states that treated its 16 and 17 year olds as adults for criminal matters. This session, changes were made to place these young people under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. However, those juveniles who commit the most serious of crimes will continue to be referred to the adult system. In the juvenile system, the focus will be on rehabilitation instead of punishment.