



Dear Neighbors:

It is an honor and pleasure to represent you and all of our district at the Connecticut General Assembly this session. It's wonderful to have an engaged constituency who communicates actively with me to let me know your thoughts on a variety of issues that are important to you. This newsletter is part of my commitment to you in return, to keep you apprised of what is going on in the state legislature. Inside is a small sample of the many bills we passed this year.

Just as Connecticut families are tightening their belts during this economic downturn, we ensured the state took a similar approach by sticking to the FY 2008/2009 budget passed by the General Assembly last year and signed into law by the Governor. Even in a year of declining revenues, we were able to hold onto our historic investments in town aid.

I worked hard to ensure that we intervened in special session to prevent the gas tax from going up as it was automatically scheduled to do, based on legislation passed in 2005. Connecticut's gas prices are already high and raising them further in this economic period made no sense.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need my help.

Sincerely,



**State Representative**  
**Linda Orange**

Capitol: 1-800-842-1902  
District: (860) 537-3936  
Linda.Orange@cga.ct.gov

*I look forward to hearing from you!*

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
HARTFORD, CT  
Permit No. 3937



**Linda Orange**  
**State Representative**

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING

ROOM 4019

HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591

Capitol: 1-800-842-1902

District: (860) 537-3936

Linda.Orange@cga.ct.gov

# State Representative Linda Orange

48th House District  
Representing Colchester and  
East Haddam / Moodus



## Capitol Report

2008



# Legislation Passed

## • AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE DISCOUNTS •

It is now easier for individuals over the age of 60 to be eligible for auto insurance discounts resulting from the completion of a safe driver course. It eliminates the requirement of an in-person final exam for people using an Internet course.

## • YOUR CAR, YOUR CHOICE •

New legislation will give vehicle owners – rather than insurance companies – the right to choose where repairs are made after an accident. This law is meant to eliminate “steering” - when insurance companies require repairs only at “preferred repair shops.” Without this law, insurance companies could continue steering business to certain shops and guarantee only repairs made at those shops.



How will people know they have a choice? This law will require repair shops to notify vehicle owners on appraisal forms, estimate forms, and customer service area signs that the vehicle owners have the right to choose the licensed repair shop where the damage will be repaired. Vehicle insurance companies will have to provide similar notice on the insurance identification cards they issue to vehicle owners. East Haddam resident Bill Denya (*above*) helped to push through this legislation.

In addition, if vehicle owners choose to have repairs performed at shops associated with their insurance companies, no repairs may be made without the vehicle owners' written acknowledgement.

## • OIL AND ENERGY •

Gasoline franchise contracts may no longer prohibit dealers and distributors from offering discounts based on payment type. The goal is to reduce the per pump price by the eliminating the credit card processing fee for consumers who pay with cash.



In addition, we provided \$2.5 million to low-income families for home heating efficiency improvements and provided greater protections to consumers who prepaid home heating oil contracts with a company now in receivership (when a creditor enforces against a company's assets.)

## • WORK ZONE SAFETY •

Several new penalties aim to create a safer working environment for highway workers performing construction or maintenance activities on state roadways. One set of infractions concerns exceeding the speed limit, failing to obey traffic control devices, or threatening to assault a highway worker due to aggressive driving. The second offense is aggravated endangerment of a highway worker which results in serious physical injury or the death of a highway worker. A Highway Work Zone Advisory Council will be created which will examine new technologies and review methods to ensure Connecticut highway workers are safe, and will work to improve work zone safety.

## • MINORS IN THE WORKPLACE •

Last year, the statute allowing 15-year-olds to be employed as baggers, cashiers, or stock clerks in grocery and other retail businesses expired without being renewed. The legislature made the statute permanent, allowing 15-year-olds to work during school vacations and on Saturdays.

## • AUTISM •

Though no cure exists for autism, early therapy is increasingly beneficial for a child's development. Currently there are few insurance companies covering such therapies. A new law requires insurance companies to cover speech, physical and occupational therapies on or after January 1, 2009. This will result in decreasing the total lifetime costs of assisting those with autistic disorders.

## • CHILD PRODUCT SAFETY •

In 2007, there were over 100 different children's products that were recalled because they were found to have high amounts of lead. Connecticut became one of the few states to pass a law establishing lead limits in children's products, prohibiting the sale of these products and ones that contain asbestos, and requiring the Department of Consumer Protection to post a list of children's products that contain banned hazardous substances. It also ensures that toys previously taken off the market are not put on the market again.



## • SERVICE MEMBERS LOST IN COMBAT •

The University of Connecticut, the Connecticut State University system, and the regional community-technical colleges must waive tuition for any state resident who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a state resident killed in action while performing active military duty in the U. S. Armed Forces on or after September 11, 2001.

## • LAST SALE DATES FOR RETAIL PRODUCTS •

To ensure consumer safety, the legislature passed a law requiring clear and accessible expiration dates on food by requiring open dating, meaning the expiration date has to be displayed using a calendar date instead of a bar code on a food product.



## • JURORS •

The Jury Administrator now has the ability to add the names of people who have been summoned and served as jurors to the list of those excused from jury service for a period of three years. Those who have served but would like to volunteer availability within the three years following their service can write the Jury Administrator and request not to be excused. Also, if a juror serves 8 hours of jury duty in any one day, their employer cannot require them to work that same day.

## • PROTECTIVE ORDERS •

Courts may now issue protective orders for certain types of sexual assault and certain risk of injury to minors charges. Court-issued protective orders are criminal orders often made to protect victims of family violence.

## • SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS •

To address the drastic rise in identity theft, the legislature passed a law requiring entities which use social security numbers to destroy personal information prior to its disposal. Firms which collect social security numbers in the normal course of business must create a privacy protection policy which ensures the confidentiality of Social Security numbers. Violations will be subject to civil penalties.



## • MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON PROJECT •

This initiative will make sure the people who want to remain at home with their families can be cared for at a level that meets their needs. The Money Follows the Person program reduces reliance on institutional care for elderly and disabled Medicaid recipients, and develops community-based long-term care opportunities. The legislation expands and improves this program by increasing from 700 to 5,000 the number of individuals who can be served under it.



## • STATE-FUNDED HOME CARE PROGRAM FOR THE DISABLED •

Presently in Connecticut, people 65 years of age and older can be eligible for the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders. This law increases asset limits for the pilot home and community based services program for adults under 65. The increases for 2008 are \$20,880 to \$31,320 for a single person and \$31,320 to \$41,760 for a married couple.



## ALSO...

- Connecticut's boating safety laws now comply with federal regulations and impose federal penalties for violations.
- To provide additional support to dairy farmers, the legislature created the Connecticut Certified Milk Promotion Board within the Department of Agriculture. This board will develop and implement programs aimed at promoting the state's dairy farms and milk consumption.



Colchester - Left to Right:  
First Selectman Linda Hodge,  
Park & Rec. Director Jay Cohen,  
Rep. Orange, Selectman  
Stan Soby, Irene Malsbenden