



Rep. Orange meets for coffee and legislation ideas with local health care students Katelyn Randlov and Tracey Wilson.

Preserving Farms and Agriculture

I supported the Community Investment Act because farmlands in our town and across the state have benefitted tremendously from the program. Protecting farmlands and expanding farm businesses not only create jobs, but preserves Connecticut's quality of life.

The Community Investment Act:

- Establishes a matching grant program for towns to help farmers promote their farms;
- Creates the "Connecticut Farm Link Program," a database that links buyers with farmers wanting to sell their operations or farmland; and
- Encourages the sale of Connecticut grown products.

Hiring Experienced Police Officers

We made it easier for our cities and towns facing financial and other challenges to hire experienced police officers who can be put to work immediately. The bill:

- Allows police officers who are certified and working at a Connecticut police department to take a position in another police department without having to repeat their basic training, as long as those officers meet the standards for entry level certification; and
- Streamlines the process for our communities to be able to hire qualified and experienced police officers.

Protecting the Lives of Connecticut's Children

We can't forget that children need our help in emergency situations, which is why we amended the state's civil preparedness plan to include day care centers and activities focusing on children and youth.

The bill requires that:

- Children be evacuated and removed to a safe location;
- Parents be notified;
- Parents be reunited with their children; and
- Care be provided for children with special needs.

State Representative

Linda Orange

Proudly Serving Colchester & East Haddam / Moodus | 48th District

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LINDA ORANGE

State Representative

Colchester & East Haddam / Moodus
48th House District

Dear Friends,

The 2011 Session was a productive one, despite the impact of difficult economic times on the budget process. We exercised sound fiscal policy and made hard decisions to create a responsible budget. While there were many parts of the final state budget I do not agree with or like, that budget was balanced, protected the middle class and poor as much as possible and did not rely on gimmicks - borrowing or shifting the burden to town property tax bills.

There were several issues of local concern this year. I voted against the Haddam land swap because the majority of local residents I heard from were opposed to it. More recently, severe storms blocked roads and caused havoc with emergency vehicles and crews. I worked directly with the state emergency operations center, advocating for relief and for faster power restoration. I also fought against the potential closure of the Chester-Hadlyme ferry, which is a part of our area's tourism backbone. I advocated to Governor Malloy and the Department of Transportation for the ferry to remain open and state-funded. I was not alone and, thanks to the outpouring from our community, and the eventual approval of the state labor contract, the ferries will continue running. During the fall and winter we will be looking at a number of job creation options to help make doing business simpler in our state.

While job creation and getting our fiscal house in order were my top priorities, the legislature was able to pass many other important laws this year that will benefit Connecticut families. Many of these new laws are detailed in this newsletter, and I hope you will find this report informative. I'm happy to answer any questions about these issues, or any others, facing our state this year. Together we can work to create a better future for our friends and families.

Sincerely,

Linda A. Orange

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

CAPITOL
REPORT 2011

State Representative

Linda Orange

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CAPITOL REPORT 2011

Connecticut's Energy Future

We helped lower energy costs and your electric rates -- among the highest in the country -- while moving the state toward clean and efficient energy. By creating the new Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), we now have a single state agency focused on energy issues. The bill seeks to help create industries, jobs and businesses necessary to support a clean energy economy for the future.

New Requirements for Power Plant Construction

To better protect the lives of construction workers, we placed more stringent requirements on new power plant construction projects to avoid another tragedy like the Kleen Energy Systems plant explosion in Middletown last year. In tribute to the family members who lost loved ones in the blast and who continue to live with the aftermath, I introduced this bill as a priority this year, and named it "Dylan's Law" after Dylan Crabb, who lost his father in the explosion.

The new requirements include:

- Retaining a special inspector to inspect construction plans and the construction site for the duration of the project;
- A fee to help train local fire marshals on the complex issues of power plant construction; and
- Approval of an appropriate safety plan for nonflammable gas blows conducted at the facility.

The bill prohibits the use of flammable gases to clear pipes and specifies fines of up to \$100,000 and imprisonment for two years for any violation. The U.S. Chemical Safety Board testified on behalf of this bill hoping it will be used as a model for national legislation.



Rep. Orange at the bill signing with Governor Malloy and Jodi Thomas and Dylan Thomas Crabb, who lost their husband and father Ron Crabb in the blast at the Kleen Energy Power Plant.



Helping Seniors

The legislature focused on improving the quality of life for senior citizens by:

- Allowing some people to enroll in the ConnPACE plan if they are not eligible for Medicare;
- Rejecting the Governor's proposal to significantly raise cost-sharing in the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders;
- Expanding the state's "Money Follows the Person" program; and
- Establishing Nursing Home Grievance Committees at each facility.

In addition, grandparents' rights will be the subject of a special study aimed at enhancing their ability to seek visitation rights. I am proud to support these and other services for senior citizens.

Creating Jobs

The legislature made sure Connecticut was open for business by enacting laws that:

- Encourage businesses to create jobs by providing tax incentives through the "First Five" program;
- Expand our reinvestments in manufacturing;
- Provide student loan reimbursements for green-tech degree holders after two years employment in the field;
- Create the Connecticut Airport Authority to run our airports as economic engines to stimulate the economy; and
- Save our vocational high schools which teach the skills that put people to work.

Streamlining Government

To address the state budget crisis, we cut costs and streamlined government.

Connecticut is being run more efficiently this year due to:

- State agency consolidations;
- Upgraded technology;
- Over \$700 million in spending cuts;
- No borrowing;
- Fully funded pension obligations; and
- A commitment to staying below the Constitutional spending cap.

Affordable Health Insurance

The state is now closer to the goal of guaranteeing affordable health insurance for all Connecticut residents. The legislature:

- Opened the state employee healthcare plan to municipal employees and nonprofits;
- Established the Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange where individuals and companies with up to 50 employees can compare and purchase health insurance;
- Required insurance coverage of MRIs for breast cancer screening if a woman is found to have "dense" breast tissue.

Protecting Children Against Bullying

We expanded Connecticut's anti-bullying law to include bullying, harassment and intimidation using the Internet or mobile phones. I was the first to introduce an anti-bullying law in 2006, and I helped a local resident offer testimony to the Education Committee. I am pleased this law is now in effect.



Protecting Conservation Land and Forests

While Connecticut has safeguards to protect privately held forest land (Ten Mill Program), the tax valuation freeze that caps the tax rate at 10 mills is coming to an end for some 14 thousand acres. Any spike in property taxes could put this property at risk for development. Property owners now have two options:

- Convert the land to the state's Forest Preservation Program; or
- Remain in the Ten Mill Program at the same mill rate as the forest preservation program.

Both options protect natural resources and preserve our forest land from development.

Expanding DNA Collection

DNA samples will now be collected from convicted felons after a subsequent arrest. Since felons are likely to have committed other crimes, DNA can solve crimes with matches against a national database.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

State Representative

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