

# SESSION WRAP-UP

Dear Neighbor,

Now that the 2023 legislative session is in the rearview mirror, I want to take a moment to share some highlights of our work. Each year, thousands of bills are proposed, screened, heard in public hearings, voted on by various committees, and advanced to the floors of the House and Senate for votes. This year, of 2,616 initial bill proposals, 208 made it over the finish line and have been signed into law by Governor Lamont. The following is a recap of the most significant of those bills.

To be sure, this session was, in my opinion, “a mixed bag.” First, the good news: we passed a bipartisan budget that delivers historic tax cuts and increases funding for students, families, and our most vulnerable residents, while paying down our long-term debt, including an additional \$2.072 billion in unfunded future pension liability.

I’m very pleased that we strengthened protections for women’s reproductive rights, and we enhanced our state’s gun safety laws. We passed several bills to protect seniors, and we helped college students – including a bill I introduced to reduce college debt for graduates of Connecticut educational institutions (public, private and vocational) who decide to stay and work here

More highlights include enhancing voting rights access, including early voting and putting an unconditional (“no excuse”) absentee ballot referendum directly to the voters this November 2024. We passed legislation to protect workers, help small businesses, and enhance children’s health and education.

Now for the bad news: it was personally very painful for me that we did very little to address climate change. While we passed some good bills (including one I introduced to enhance Environmental Justice by allowing DEEP to deny permits in overburdened urban and rural areas), none addressed in a meaningful way the overarching crisis of our changing climate. I urge everyone who cares about this existential issue to testify next year on bills during public hearings – you can do this in person or virtually.

We also shortchanged our nonprofit community and failed to reform affordable housing or paid sick day legislation.

I’d love to hear from you if you would like more details or have any questions on any of the initiatives addressed in this legislative update.

Sincerely,

## LOCAL FUNDING TO TOWNS HELPING STABILIZE PROPERTY TAXES

- Reformed retirement plans for municipal employees - saving towns hundreds of thousands of dollars annually (HB 6930)
- Allowed towns to accept electronic signatures from contractors – helping streamline government and business permitting (PA 23-114)
- Provided \$60 million in new funding for town governments (HB 6941)
- Prevented any town from receiving a funding cut to their local schools (\$6.5 m)
- Continued our commitment to funding local boards of education with an honest ECS formula (\$45 million)

# NEW LAWS FOR 2023-24

FROM STATE REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTINE PALM

PROUDLY SERVING CHESTER, DEEP RIVER, ESSEX, AND HADDAM

Representative Christine Palm  
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## MAJOR ACTS 2023



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# NEW LAWS IN CONNECTICUT 2023 2024



## FROM STATE REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTINE PALM

PROUDLY SERVING CHESTER, DEEP RIVER, ESSEX, AND HADDAM



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## SUPPORTING SENIORS

- Established a coordinator of services for people with dementia (PA 23-48)
- Strengthened patients' involvement in their homemaker care plans and streamlined the process for filing complaints (PA 23-48)
- Increased funding for elderly nutrition and Meals on Wheels (HB 6941)

## SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED

- Granted free graduate school tuition to eligible veterans and their families, as well as active members of the National Guard (PA 23-139)
- Eased licensing requirements for childcare providers who serve military families (PA 23-29)

## IMPROVING HEALTHCARE

- Allowed over-the-counter drugs, Narcan, and other lifesaving opioid antagonists, to be sold at regulated vending machines (PA 23-52)
- Expanded pharmacy services to include vaccine administration of CDC immunizations, testing for COVID, flu, and HIV, and providing prescriptions for preventative HIV treatment (PA 23-19)
- Established the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate to help providers and patients navigate our insurance system (PA 23-101)
- Created a statewide Drug Discount Card Program, regulated pharmaceutical sales reps, and banned anticompetitive loopholes in healthcare contracts (HB 6669)
- Expanded coverage for gender-affirming care and strengthened protections for those who provide that care (HB 6941)
- Established funding and benefits for firefighters who are diagnosed with cancer (HB 6941)

## ELIMINATING MORE TAXES ON RETIREMENT

- Current law exempts 100% of pension and annuity income from the state's income tax, and we are halfway to phasing out 100% of IRA income for those making \$75,000 or less annually (\$100,000 for joint filers). We extended these exemptions to taxpayers making up to \$100,000 (\$150,000 for joint filers) by phasing out the deduction between 2.5% and 100%, depending on your income.



## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

- Allowed DEEP to deny permits for factories, waste plants, and other polluters or to place conditions on them when they are proposed in overburdened locations that have historically dealt with high levels of pollution (SB 1147) (This is known as "Environmental Justice.")
- Banned hand-harvesting of horseshoe crabs (PA 23-6)
- Protected migratory birds by requiring state-owned and leased buildings to turn off unnecessary outdoor lighting (PA 23-143)
- Provided additional funding to towns to deal with harmful chemicals like PFAS (PA 23-74)
- Expanded eligibility for Microgrid and Resilience Loans - allowing the state to build more green buildings (PA 23-157)
- Expanded bonding funds for bikeways, greenways and trails (HB 6482)
- Held tire manufacturers partly responsible for recycling them (HB 6486)

## HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE THEIR BEST LIVES

- Banned child marriages (PA 23-44)
- Moved up the eligibility age for starting kindergarten by three months (to align with more states) and will require more play-based learning from pre-K to grade 5 (HB 6880)
- Created reimbursements to schools that purchase local foods for their school meals (SB 1)
- Required high schoolers to take a financial literacy class before graduating (SB 1)
- Required funds from the state's legal settlement with vape-giant JUUL to be dedicated to helping young people under age 21 (PA 23-47)

## MODERNIZING OUR VOTING ACCESS

- Enacted early voting - providing voting opportunities 14 days before Election Day for general elections, 7 days before most primaries, and 4 days before special elections and the Presidential primary (PA 23-5)
- Approved a resolution that will ask voters in the Nov. 2024 election whether we should have no excuse absentee ballots (HJ 1)
- Adopted anti-discrimination laws around voting (HB 6941)

## STANDING UP FOR CONSUMERS

- Required companies that charge you through an auto-renewal subscription to get your permission before charging you for the next billing cycle (HB 5314)
- Protected precise geolocation data under our data privacy laws and toughened standards for advertising targeted to children (PA 23-98)
- Restricted types of telemarketing calls, texts, and social media solicitations and limited hours telemarketing can take place (PA 23-98)
- Prohibited utility companies from passing off their lobbying and marketing expenses through rate hikes (PA 23-102)
- Protected consumer health data by restricting its access and sale and banned targeted ads near mental health and reproductive health facilities (PA 23-56)

## MAKING CONNECTICUT SAFER

- Expanded GPS monitoring of domestic violence offenders (PA 23-106)
- Made it illegal for adults to solicit photos and videos from young people online, even if they're not explicitly sexual (PA 23-123)
- Required trained EMTs to carry and use EpiPens (PA 23-97)
- Expanded speed enforcement on rural roads (HB 6941)
- Improved data collection on crimes involving firearms (PA 23-69)
- Created electronic notifications for expiring gun permits (PA 23-73)

## SUPPORTING WORKERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

- Created tax credits and incentives for towns and businesses that build workforce housing, including for teachers, police officers, and firefighters (SB 998)
- Cut the number of reporting requirements for businesses (PA 23-4)
- Supported Connecticut farm wineries by allowing them to open up to three retail locations (PA 23-49)
- Protected workers whose health benefits are terminated by an employer following a strike or labor dispute (SB 228)
- Cut business taxes to expand childcare facilities (HB 6941)
- Made it easier for small contractors to bid on state projects (HB 6941)

## A HELPING HAND TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Created a student loan forgiveness program that will forgive up to \$20,000 in debt in exchange for volunteering at a local nonprofit starting in July 2024 (HB 6941)
- Established lower state-backed loan refinancing rates for licensed nurses with student loans (PA 23-60)
- Created student loan subsidies for para-educators and school counselors in our lowest-performing districts, as well as for police officers in distressed municipalities and emergency medical service personnel (PA 23-70)

## PROTECTING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- Allowed pharmacists to prescribe emergency contraceptives (PA 23-52)
- Directed all state college and university campuses to provide reproductive health resources to students (PA 23-41)
- Invested in state research and development for endometriosis treatment and prevention (PA 23-67)
- Created mental health toolkits for new parents (PA 23-97)
- Protected pharmacists and health care providers who are licensed in other states from discipline when they provide reproductive health services in our state (PA 23-31)
- Kept health care providers from being punished, losing their license, or experiencing insurance hikes because they provided reproductive health-care services (PA 23-128)
- Extended health insurance coverage for newborns from 61 days to 91 days (HB 6941)