



Representative Ritter (far left) welcomed the Weaver High School State Champion Girls Basketball team to the Capitol.

Encouraging Job Growth

We continued the state's commitment to job growth and economic recovery with new legislation that expands the Small Business Express Program, allowing an estimated 3,600 additional businesses to apply for state assistance. The program allows small businesses to access much-needed funding for capital investments, training and hiring.

In addition, the bill:

- Establishes the Unemployed Armed Forces Member STEP-UP (Subsidized Training and Employment) Program with grants to subsidize a business's cost of hiring unemployed veterans during their first 180 days on the job.
- Creates the "Connecticut Made" and "Connecticut Treasures" programs to promote products made in Connecticut and the state's cultural, educational and historic attractions.
- Develops a plan to allow the state to give preferential incentives and economic development assistance to companies that will relocate jobs from overseas to Connecticut.

Job Creation through Brownfield Cleanup

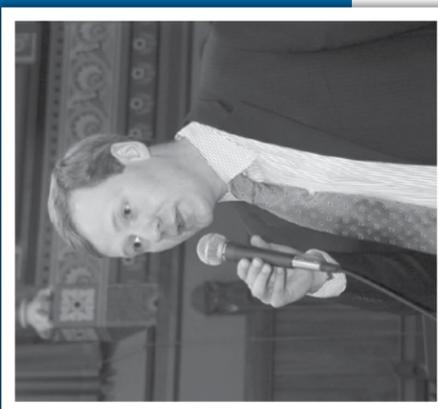
This session, we passed a new law to allow swifter conversion of contaminated and long-abandoned properties to productive sites for economic development, open space and other public uses. It will also direct the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to perform an in-depth analysis of the state's brownfield remediation and development programs and recommend changes to those programs to make them more effective.

Summer Jobs for Young People

The legislature gave more young people the opportunity to work with new funding for youth employment summer jobs and adult evening education programs.

State Representative
Matt Ritter
Proudly Serving Hartford & Bloomfield
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State Representative Matt Ritter

Proudly Serving Hartford & Bloomfield 1st Assembly District

Dear Neighbor,

The 2012 legislative session brought important changes to laws impacting education, elections, and the storm response of utility companies.

In addition, one of the hallmarks of the 2012 session was the passage of a fiscal year 2013 budget adjustment bill that did not raise taxes.

A year ago, we dealt with a shortfall in excess of \$3 billion – 15 percent of our total budget. This year, the House of Representatives passed a budget adjustment that keeps appropriations under the state's spending cap and continues our investments in education and job growth, while preserving the safety net for our most vulnerable residents.

I hope this report is informative. I am happy to answer any questions about these issues or any others facing our state.

Together we can create a better future for our families.

Best,



Rep. Ritter helps kick off a 24-hour reading of the 19th century literary classic Uncle Tom's Cabin at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford.

CAPITOL UPDATE 2012

Rep. Ritter and Jennifer Cassidy speaking at a press conference promoting home ownership in Hartford.



Capitol Briefs

Reducing Domestic Violence – strengthens laws to better protect victims and hold abusers accountable. We gave police officers the tools they need to better identify and respond to domestic violence. We also improved access to and enforcement of protective and restraining orders.

Racial Profiling – too many individuals in our communities continue to suffer from bias based on their appearance. This bill strengthens an existing law aimed at stopping police from profiling motorists based on race during traffic stops.

Election Day Voter Registration – makes it easier for Connecticut residents to vote with an eye on increasing voter participation. The bill allows eligible Connecticut residents to register to vote and cast a ballot on Election Day. Residents would also be able to go online and use their driver's license number to log into a secure website and register to vote.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors and Alarms - requires all one-family dwellings to be equipped with smoke detection and warning equipment. It also requires all one- and two-family dwellings to be equipped with carbon monoxide detectors, unless they do not contain a fuel burning appliance, fireplace, or attached garage.

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Capital Region Development Authority

A new law redesignates the quasi-public Capital City Economic Development Authority (CCEDA) as the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA), preserving many of CCEDA's powers, including the authority to issue bonds. The act expands the district and the range of eligible projects and allows CRDA to plan and implement some of these projects outside the district. The act also:

1. Increases the number of housing units CRDA may construct or rehabilitate in the district.
2. Authorizes CRDA to develop and redevelop property anywhere in Hartford.
3. Extends by four years, from June 30, 2013, to June 30, 2017, the deadline for the State Bond Commission to issue up to \$115 million in state bonds for DECD to fund projects in the district, including housing rehabilitation and new construction, demolition, and redevelopment.

Joint Federal-State Mortgage Servicing Settlement

Five major banks (Bank of America, Citibank, Chase, GMAC, Wells Fargo) in the state agreed to a settlement that protects victims of unfair foreclosures, provides support for housing counseling, and provides state-level foreclosure prevention programs. The banks must allocate funds for homeowner assistance by:

- Allowing houses to be bought and sold when the mortgage balance exceeds the value of the property.
- Defer payments for homeowners who are between jobs.
- Offering relocation assistance for homeowners facing foreclosure.
- Waiving deficiency balances.
- Funding for remediation of blighted properties.

The banks have agreed to major reforms in how they handle mortgage loans requiring lenders and servicers to adhere to a long list of rights. For more information, please visit these websites: nationalmortgagesettlement.com and hud.gov.

Diversions Programs for Vets with PTSD & Legal Issues

So many of our service men and women return home and face a variety of challenges, not the least of which are legal issues and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. A federally funded pilot program for veterans dealing with these issues is helpful but limited, so we expanded the program to more locations throughout the state.

Senior Focus

Protecting the quality of life for our senior citizens is a top priority. This year the legislature focused on healthcare and grandparents' rights.

GRANDPARENTS' RIGHTS - Grandparents can sometimes be separated from their grandchildren's lives particularly when divorce or disagreements occur. This new law helps grandparents seeking visitation rights in the courts if they can show a parent-like relationship exists, and that a denial of visitation rights could cause harm to the child.

HOSPICE CARE - There are currently only two licensed hospices in the entire state. This new law will allow smaller, local hospice facilities the opportunity to provide high quality services to patients and their family and friends closer to home.

PRESERVING MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY – This legislation ensured thousands of seniors and people with disabilities could continue to use the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to help pay for their Medicare co-pays and deductibles by raising the income limit for MSP to accommodate a 3.6 percent Social Security cost of living increase (COLA) which took effect January 1.

Education Reform

Our education initiative will provide new support to help turn around underperforming schools. The education reform package has long-term implications for our children and for the state's economic well-being. The better we prepare children for the 21st Century workforce, the stronger we'll make Connecticut's economy. The bill:

- Includes more funding for school-based health centers and family resource centers.
- Recognizes the critical importance of early childhood education by underwriting 1,000 school readiness slots for preschoolers and funding initiatives to improve early reading success.
- Creates the Commissioner's Network, to provide the intensive supports and interventions needed to turn around 25 of the most chronically low-performing schools.



Rep. Ritter with Quan Jennings of the Hartford Boys and Girls Club in the House Chamber.