

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
MATT RITTER

PROUDLY SERVING HARTFORD

Dear Friends,

It has been and continues to be an honor to serve you in the General Assembly. During the 2016 session of the Connecticut General Assembly, significant legislation was passed to help protect and improve the quality of life for Connecticut families while addressing tough economic challenges.

As always, I take great pride in my work as Co-Chair of the Public Health Committee. This session, we passed laws to help address the state's horrific opioid crisis and to aid families and caregivers of children with intellectual and physical disabilities.

Although balancing the state budget was challenging this year, we protected the cut in car taxes that will save Hartford families money beginning July 1, 2016. The budget caps car tax rates at 37 mills, a large decrease from Hartford's current rate of 74.29 mills. This saves Hartford residents \$13.9 million in car taxes without impacting the city budget.

I highlighted some of the accomplishments of the 2016 session in this newsletter, which I hope you find informative. If you would like more information about these topics or any other issue, please call me at 860-240-8500 or email me at matthew.ritter@cga.ct.gov.

Warmest regards,

Matt Ritter



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CAPITOL UPDATE 2016



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Pictured above: Rep. Matt Ritter speaks at the grand opening of the Zunner Building in Hartford, a project for which he obtained state funding. After significant renovations, the previously neglected property at the corner of Ashley and Garden Streets will now offer new retail, residential and office space in the historic Asylum Hill neighborhood.

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TACKLING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

In recent years, Connecticut, like other New England states, has seen a heartbreaking increase in fatal opioid overdoses. As Co-Chair of the Public Health Committee, I was proud to introduce groundbreaking legislation to combat this crisis. This lifesaving law will allow any licensed healthcare professional to administer drugs that reverse opioid overdoses, require municipalities to equip their first responders with the opioid reversal drug Narcan, and cap first-time opioid prescriptions at a 7-day supply. (PA 16-43)

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Some of our state's most vulnerable families are those struggling to support individuals with disabilities. This year, we worked to improve communication between families and the Department of Developmental Services while they are on the waiting list for services. We also clarified who has access to a client's file when it comes to guardianship cases and those involved in their cases. (PA 16-60, PA 16-49)

ENSURING ACCESS TO LEGAL SERVICES

Everyone must be treated fairly under the law and ensuring reliable access to legal services is the keystone to that fundamental right. That's why the legislature ensured funding for legal services for the poor. Additionally, a newly established task force will examine the issue of ensuring legal representation for individuals in civil courts and report its findings to the General Assembly later this year. (SA 16-19)

VETERANS

We stand by our veterans. The legislature passed measures that will facilitate veteran employment by creating a resource network through the Department of Labor for veterans with specialized skills and giving a preference to veteran-owned small businesses bidding for state contracts. We also approved a resolution to our nation's leaders to recognize Blue Water Navy Veterans' exposure to Agent Orange. (PA 16-184, PA 16-68, HJ-25)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women in abusive relationships are five times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to a firearm. Connecticut averaged 14 intimate partner homicides per year from 2000 to 2012. Firearms were used in 39 percent of those 188 homicides, making them the most commonly used weapon to commit intimate partner homicide. Connecticut is taking great strides in protecting women and children from domestic violence by requiring a person to surrender firearms after being served with a temporary restraining order. Additional legislation strengthens sexual exploitation and human trafficking prevention laws in the state. (PA 16-34, PA 16-71)

IMPROVING PUBLIC HOUSING ACCESS

Many elderly and disabled people have a hard time paying a security deposit up front, so we have passed legislation that requires housing authorities and public housing corporations to allow their tenants to pay their security deposits in installments instead of the usual lump sum. The installments will be based on a tenant's income and can be paid over the course of a year. (PA 16-74)

FIREFIGHTERS' CANCER RELIEF FUND

It is important that we recognize and take care of firefighters who put their lives on the line for us. This legislation establishes a relief fund for both paid and volunteer firefighters who are battling work-related cancer. Other legislation allows municipal property tax relief for retired volunteer firefighters, fire police officers and EMTs who volunteered at least 25 years of service. (PA 16-10, PA 16-99)

PROTECTING POLLINATORS

Honeybees don't just give us delicious honey, as pollinators they're also crucial to the environment and local agriculture. That's why we passed legislation to address the collapse of bee colonies and ensure our pollinators remain healthy. This legislation will prohibit the use of certain harmful pesticides and encourage the planting of pollinator-friendly vegetation. (PA 16-17)



Both Rep. Ritter and the children enjoyed a visit highlighted by reading together at the CRT's Thomas D. Ritter Early Care and Education Center.



Rep. Ritter with members of the Hartford delegation at Hartford Public High School to announce a new scholarship program between UConn and Hartford Public Schools.



Rep. Ritter speaking at Connecticut Arts Day at the State Capitol. Connecticut Arts Day was organized by Hartford resident and Head of Cultural Programs for the Department of Economic and Community Development, Kristina Newman-Scott.