

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Jason Rojas

RENTSCHLER FIELD IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

In an effort to set the stage for a new phase of development at Rentschler Field we passed legislation that creates a Rentschler Field Improvement District in an effort to expand opportunities for commercial investment and financing options for the development of infrastructure critical to economic growth. The area is home to Cabela’s, The Research Center and UConn Football Stadium. There is also great interest in further investment on 136 acres of the available land. The development zone is centrally located and has excellent access to major transportation routes. Initial interest in a significant retail and entertainment destination development has been identified and the designation of the Improvement District is an initial step in the state’s willingness to make development a reality for the field, which would provide an economic boost for the town and region.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

In the upcoming fiscal year both East Hartford and Manchester will see an increase in funds to many programs that are vital to the community. In East Hartford funds for education increased by about \$3 million and school transportation funding stayed the same. The amount of money for road repair projects also doubled in East Hartford allowing for an increase in road work.

Manchester also saw increase in many areas including funds for education, which increased by close to \$1.5 million while funds for adult education services also increased by \$10,000. In addition, Manchester had its road repairs funds double. This budget helps these programs keep running without putting the burden on the taxpayer.



CONTINUED FUNDING FOR
ADULT EDUCATION PILOT
PROGRAM AT MANCHESTER
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Given the positive outcomes for students enrolled in this pilot program, the budget included continued funding for the program in an effort to support students who need the remedial assistance to be adequately prepared for college level courses. The need to provide non-credit remedial courses has been an ongoing challenge for the state and this program will allow Manchester Adult Education to provide support at a lower cost and with better outcomes for students and working adults.

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Jason Rojas
PROUDLY SERVING EAST HARTFORD & MANCHESTER | 9TH DISTRICT



300 Capitol Ave.
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Capitol: 800-842-8267
www.housedems.ct.gov/Rojas/

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Jason
Rojas

PROUDLY SERVING 9TH DISTRICT



CAPITOL UPDATE 2013

Dear Neighbor:

The 2013 session was dominated by the focus on gun safety and regulation in response to the Newtown tragedy last December. A significant amount of time and energy was spent on the myriad proposals that were offered by many legislators. In the end we passed a bipartisan package of changes that reflects a compromise based on feedback from the public, legislators and advocacy groups. Once the debate on gun safety and regulation was completed work on the biennial state budget took center stage as well as a focus on many proposals that came out of the 28 legislative committees where most of our work is done.

The budget is the product of negotiation and compromise and included funding for a number of important programs important to our district and towns. We worked to mitigate increases in taxes while making changes to revenue and tax incentive programs that were not producing the kind of outcomes we felt they needed to. As Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee I authored legislation that would reform and enhance existing programs to encourage better coordination between towns in the delivery of services in an effort to chip away at the burden that property taxes placed on all of us.

Ultimately 327 bills were passed and signed into law. This update is intended to provide a snapshot of higher profile bills that passed as well as some that I worked on as your representative. Detailed information on all the bills is available. If you’re interested just ask and I can provide summaries. Please continue to share your thoughts and stances on issues as often as possible because it makes me a more effective legislator. Together we can shape the direction that we want our state, our district and our communities to go in.

Sincerely,

J-Rj

Jason Rojas, State Representative



STREAMLINING STATE GOVERNMENT

Making Connecticut's government more efficient is essential to building a healthy economy and business climate, and a new law we passed reduces the state's costs by eliminating or reconfiguring various boards and commissions. Many boards listed are no longer active or have functions duplicated in other entities.

ANTI-BLIGHT TASK FORCE

Blighted properties have a negative effect on entire neighborhoods and communities, bringing down property values and even causing blight to spread. New legislation creates a statewide task force that will develop model municipal blight ordinances and propose legislation to help municipalities to address blight more effectively.



Rep. Rojas & Rep. Diminico with a third grade class from Robertson Elementary School of Manchester

**SCHOOL ROOF PITCH PROJECTS**

This year we eliminated a costly state mandate related to school roof construction projects that was costing our municipalities and the state millions of dollars in avoidable school construction expenses every year. The mandate, in place for 10 years, required that when a school is built that its roof be constructed with a pitch higher than what the State Building Code required. The mandate was put in place out of concerns that a lower pitch was resulting in negative indoor air quality in our schools. School construction professionals and architects argued that there was no documented connection between the pitch of a roof and indoor air quality. The pitch requirement resulted in a 15 percent to 25 percent increase in unnecessary costs. The new law we passed could save \$6 million to \$10 million on the \$40 million worth of projects that were scheduled to be funded this year.

POOL SAFETY AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This year we were tasked with addressing pool safety in the wake of drownings in East Hartford and Manchester. The opportunity to swim in school provides many benefits for students while also presenting a new set of challenges when it comes to ensuring safety. Swimming educators and legislators worked to pass a bill that establishes and phases in statewide safety standards for all public school pools being used for physical education classes, interscholastic activities, or extracurricular activities. It requires among other things that a "qualified educator," "qualified swimming coach" or "qualified lifeguard" be present, in addition to the individual who is instructing the group. There was a consensus that two sets of eyes on the pool were necessary. In addition, schools will be required by July 1, 2014, to develop a pool safety plan for each activity.

REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

This year the Planning & Development Committee and legislature passed major legislation aimed at helping our towns and cities work together to deliver services more effectively and efficiently in an effort to mitigate property taxes. The bill represents a fundamental shift in how we approach regionalism in Connecticut. It's a systems change that brings together the chief elected officials of our towns and cities to improve communication and strategic planning. The bill reallocates existing resources to Regional Councils of Governments so they can have the capacity and technical expertise to plan, coordinate and deliver services on a regional basis while respecting local control. Our state is too dependent on the property tax and this legislation will get us on the road to reducing that burden.

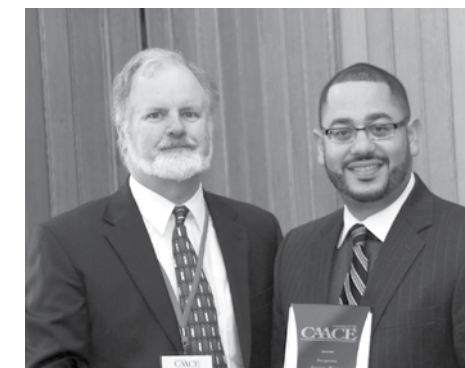
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**SERVING AT RISK
YOUTH PRO-ACTIVELY**

During the debate on gun safety this past spring there was much discussion about the need to be proactive in addressing gun violence with an emphasis on urban areas and youth violence prevention. Working with legislative leadership, members of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus were able to allocate resources for locally led prevention and intervention programs to reduce youth violence and divert individuals from the juvenile justice system. Through this effort I was able to secure grants for both East Hartford and Manchester youth service departments. Our youth service professionals are the front line for reaching at-risk youth and the sooner that we can engage our young people the better outcomes we will have for them. We will be better off as communities and ultimately we will have better outcomes for the dollars we spend trying to reduce youth violence and delinquency.



Rep. Rojas receiving an award from CAACE for his advocacy of adult education

M.O.R.E.

This important working group has been tasked with finding ways to reduce our governments' reliance on local property taxes. The task force is all-encompassing, bringing together not just legislators, but also mayors and first selectmen, regional entities, board of education members, public safety officials, municipal employees and administration and other interested parties from throughout the state.

This task force was established in 2009 and during its initial effort it put into place legislation that allowed for our municipality to cooperate with surrounding towns to form cooperative agreements, which allow for group purchasing of equipment and prescriptions. This can help us save money and lower our local property taxes.

This is not a new process, but one that needs to be re-invigorated. Teamwork and partnering up can benefit everyone by saving our municipalities money and forging new working relationships.

CONTACT INFORMATION

300 Capitol Ave.
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Capitol: 800-842-8267
www.housedems.ct.gov/name

