



Photo of Silver Sands taken by
Mr. John Richards - Singing with Light Photography

LONG ISLAND SOUND BLUE PLAN AND RESOURCE AND USE INVENTORY

Long Island Sound remains one of our most precious state resources. To protect the Sound, the “Blue Plan” will inventory the resources, uses and conservation areas of our portion of Long Island Sound. With this plan in place, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection along with the newly established 16-member Long Island Sound Resource and Use Inventory and Blue Plan Advisory Committee will be able to more clearly and effectively manage our offshore waters through data-driven processes. It will also help streamline, allocate and coordinate our resources, including state agencies, academic institutions, and other stakeholders. Plans similar to this have been instituted by a number of our neighboring coastal states with great success.

PROTECTING OUR SENIORS

We have taken steps to protect our seniors from abuse and from being taken advantage of financially. This law adds a number of protections, including:

- EMT’s are added to the list of mandated reporters of elder abuse.
- Certain financial agents must receive training on elderly fraud, exploitation, and financial abuse.
- Someone convicted of 1st or 2nd degree larceny or 1st degree abuse of an elderly or disabled person is prohibited from inheriting, receiving insurance benefits, or receiving certain property.



Milford Senior Center

STATE REPRESENTATIVE KIM ROSE

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PROTECTING ELECTRIC CONSUMERS

This year, the legislature stood up for consumers by giving electric ratepayers more say in the process of changing rates and protecting consumers from exploitative variable electric rates. Now, when UI or Eversource propose to increase rates, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) must hold at least two public hearings, which will allow consumers to speak directly with regulators. Connecticut residents are also now protected from electricity providers who offer very low introductory rates that rapidly increase. Connecticut is the first state in the nation to enact this important consumer protection law. Competitive electric suppliers must now give their customers a 60-day notice of the end of their contract and must allow customers who want to switch to standard service the ability to do that within 72 hours.



Connecticut State Capitol



Rep. Rose in the House Chamber during the Legislative Session

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REDUCING REQUIRED TESTING IN SCHOOLS

Since the rollout of No Child Left Behind almost 15 years ago, standardized testing has come under a lot of scrutiny. One area of concern is that there are simply too many of them. For example, juniors in high school are currently required to take the SBAC exam at a time when many of them are taking the SAT or ACT college admission tests. As we work statewide and across the country to improve the use of standardized tests, the legislature took another big step forward this year by allowing schools to waive SBAC testing for any students taking these college admissions tests.



Rep. Rose and Rep. Rebimbas award the American Lung Association a donation from the Connecticut General Assembly

BIG NEWS IN COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

Student loan debt is an issue that impacts many Connecticut families. Sixty-four percent of college graduates in our state have student loan debt. This year, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to create a Student Loan Bill of Rights, which establishes an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman. This office will: regulate student loan servicers, compile data on borrower complaints, develop a financial literacy education course for students, and will help student borrowers and their parents navigate the loan process.

Students can also take advantage of the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority's (CHESLA) lowest interest rate yet. CHESLA has announced that it will offer its lowest-ever fixed interest rate at 4.95%, down from its current rate of 6.75%. This rate is also significantly lower than the upcoming Federal PLUS loan rate of 6.84%.

In addition, we passed a law that will help address the rising cost of college textbooks. This new law establishes a pilot program on the use of open-source textbooks in hopes of increasing their usage in colleges across the state. Open-source textbooks are licensed, college-level textbooks made available for free on the Internet to students, faculty, and the public.



Devon Bridge

ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT WOMEN VETERANS' PROGRAM

This year the legislature passed legislation that recognizes the important sacrifices female veterans have made while defending our country. The program will submit an annual report to the legislature recommending new initiatives and detailing which benefits and services would be best for female veterans.

IMPROVING RESIDENTIAL SERVICES AT THE VETERANS' HOME IN ROCKY HILL

Since 1940, the Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill has served our vets in need with a range of rehabilitative, medical, and vocational services. A new law implements several recommendations from a 2014 study on the Home including:

- Residents will have two seats on the Board of Trustees.
- A process will be developed for residents to file complaints.
- No veteran will go without housing should something happen to the Home.
- A plan will be submitted to the General Assembly to implement other recommendations— including more transitional housing and on-campus work programs, and greater privacy for residents.



Stone Tower

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