

RESPONSIBLE LENDING AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

The mortgage crisis has hit many Connecticut families hard this year. Legislation enacted this session offers assistance to them through the creation of new state programs (HERO and Mortgage Crisis Job Training) and the enhancement of existing state programs (CT Families and EMAP). This law includes a new foreclosure mediation program the courts will use to determine if and how families can keep making mortgage payments and avoid foreclosure. The bill creates stricter regulations and greater penalties on lenders and brokers when writing loans for people who have limited income and who carry higher debt.



The agencies to contact regarding these programs are The Department of Banking's Foreclosure Assistance Hotline at **877-472-8313** and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority at **860-571-3500**. (Public Act 08-176)

CHILD PRODUCT SAFETY

In 2007, there were over 100 different children's products that were recalled because they were found to have high amounts of lead. A child even died from swallowing a charm that had a high concentration of lead!

Connecticut became one of the few states in the Union to pass a bill that establishes lead limits in children's products, prohibits the sale of these products and ones that contain asbestos, and requires the Department of Consumer Protection to post a list of children's products that are banned hazardous substances. It also ensures that toys previously taken off the market are not put on the market again at places like dollar stores. This bill will protect Connecticut's children from dangerous toys. (Public Acts 08-106 and 08-122)

MINORS IN THE WORKPLACE

This bill makes permanent a statute that allows 15-year-olds to work as baggers, cashiers or stock clerks in grocery and other retail establishments; 14-year-olds are also eligible to work as caddies or in pro shops. They are able to work during school vacations and the summer. Those who work in a retail food establishment can also work on Saturdays. (Public Act 08-108)

CHANGES TO THE INSURANCE STATUTES

Effective January 1, 2009, under an individual policy, children may continue coverage at least until the policy anniversary date on or after the date the child marries; moves to another state unless the child is under age 19; is a full-time student at an accredited school of higher education; becomes covered under a group health plan through his or her employment; or turns age 26. (Public Act 08-147)



Representative Ryan with Infantryman Ryan Henowitz and his mother, Susan Carey. Ryan was honored for his service as a medic during two tours of duty in Iraq.

2008 Legislative Bulletin

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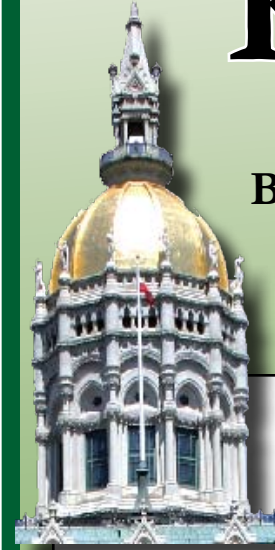


State Representative Kevin Ryan

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State Representative
KEVIN RYAN

139th District Serving
Bozrah-Franklin-Lebanon-Montville

Session 2008

Dear Neighbor,

Even in a year of declining revenues, we were able to hold onto our historic investments in health care and town aid. The municipal aid package increased by \$131.5 million over FY 2007/2008 and the Medicaid rates increased by more than \$120 million. In all, the budget provides a 4% increase (\$814 million) over the current year with no tax increases.

I am happy to report we have postponed the increase in the gas tax which was scheduled for July 1, and gas stations are now able to offer a discount for purchasing fuel with cash.

Citing a guiding principle of safety – safety for teens and for everyone with whom they share the road – our teen driving reforms establish new requirements for 16- and 17-year-olds and, in some cases, their parents or legal guardians, both before and after they get their drivers' licenses.

Our actions during the legislative session reflects a balanced, responsible approach to government, protecting our citizens and building on past initiatives to create and maintain opportunities and an environment which encourages citizens to work and live in Connecticut.

Best wishes,

Kevin Ryan
Kevin Ryan



CONNECTICUT GLOBAL WARMING SOLUTIONS

This year Connecticut became the fifth state in the nation to adopt mandatory limits on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. The legislation establishes two steps for mandatory greenhouse gas emission caps: a) 10% below 1990 levels to be attained by 2020, and b) 80% below 2001 levels by 2050.



This law will require low-carbon fuel standards for all motor vehicle and home heating fuels sold in the state. It will also require the State Building Code to reflect more stringent energy standards. (Public Act 08-98)

RADIATION RELEASES

Nuclear reactors are a potent source of energy, but they can pose great risks, too. To help safeguard our environment, nuclear power plant operators are now required to report any unplanned or excessive radiation releases directly to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). A plant operator must post any planned radiation releases on the plant's website as soon as they are scheduled. Also, the DEP must monitor nuclear plants and their surrounding environment and review the training of plant workers. (Public Act 08-20)

SUPPORTING CONNECTICUT'S DAIRY AND AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

To provide additional support to Connecticut's dairy farmers, the legislature created the Connecticut Certified Milk Promotion Board within the Department of Agriculture. This board will develop and implement programs aimed at promoting the state's dairy farms and milk consumption. (Public Act 08-164)

Connecticut's agriculture business is very important to the people of our state and our economy. The legislature has made the Agriculture Viability Matching Grant Program more accessible for municipalities. Eligible grants include local capital projects to foster agricultural viability, including farmer's markets and processing facilities, and the development and implementation of agriculturally friendly land use regulations and local farmland protection strategies. This bill increases the value of the Women, Infants and Children program farmer's market vouchers from \$2 to \$3. Additionally, this bill deletes the sunset provision concerning commercial and customer formula feeds. (Public Act 08-13)

This bill was created to encourage participation and add enrollment opportunities in Agricultural Science and Technology programs, formerly known as Vocational Agriculture. Local boards of education also must provide enrollment opportunities each year, including slots for freshmen to enroll. (Public Act 08-152)

MANUFACTURING ASSISTANCE ACT

With assistance from the state, businesses will be encouraged to locate and stay in Connecticut. This bill allows for more businesses to apply for funding from the Manufacturing Assistance Act by reducing the required criteria—"economic base businesses" are now able to apply. (Public Act 08-34)

THE TEACHING OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

To better address developmentally-disabled students' needs, Special Act 08-5 improves education training to teachers and paraprofessionals through recommendations that incorporate effective teaching methods into teacher preparation and professional development.

In 2006 the legislature established a two-year pilot program to provide services to adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders who do not have mental retardation, for up to 50 people in the New Haven and Middlesex County regions. The program provides coordinated services and support, including case management. This year's law expands the number of people who can participate in the pilot to 75. It also requires the Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services to ensure that eligible adults living outside the pilot's current service area have access to the expanded slots, and it extends the pilot's end date by nine months to June 30, 2009. (Public Act 08-63)

SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A new law clarifies the in-school suspension limitation and strengthens the bullying policy currently in place. Starting July 1, 2009, out-of-school suspensions may only be allowed after a hearing is held to determine if a student is too dangerous or disruptive. In-school suspensions will now be a maximum of ten days rather than five.

The law also takes steps to strengthen the current law on bullying in schools. Verified written reports of bullying now must be filed with the Department of Education. Schools must also create a prevention strategy in addition to an intervention strategy to address bullying behavior. (Public Act 08-160)

ENSURING PATIENT ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDER INFORMATION

This year the legislature took steps to provide patients with information to help them make well-informed decisions when choosing their health care providers. Current law requires Connecticut-licensed physicians to provide the Department of Public Health (DPH) with a profile that includes information on their medical education, practice specialties, appointments to medical school faculty, the hospitals and nursing homes where they have privileges, and information on disciplinary actions, malpractice claims, and felony convictions within the last 10 years. Our new legislation requires that dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, podiatrists, naturopaths, dental hygienists, advanced practice registered nurses, and physical therapists also file profiles for DPH to post online. Physician profiles are currently available to the public on DPH's website at www.physicians.dph.state.ct.us. (Public Act 08-108, effective Jan. 1, 2010)

IN-STATE BID PREFERENCES

The legislature passed a new bill that changes the procedure for awarding state contracts when the lowest responsible qualified bidder is an out-of-state business that receives a preference in its home state. Starting January 1, the State Contracting Standards Board must publish an annual list of states that give preference to in-state bidders, including the percentage amount of the preference. When awarding a state contract, the state contracting agencies will add to out-of-state bids a percentage increase that equals the preference that business receives in its home state. If the addition results in an in-state business becoming the lowest responsible qualified bidder, the agency must award the contract to the in-state business if it agrees, in writing, to meet the original lowest responsible qualified bid. (Public Act 08-154)

COMPREHENSIVE ETHICS REFORM

Over the last few years, through a series of incremental changes, the General Assembly has taken action to strengthen the ethics laws for public officials. This June, in its most decisive action, the General Assembly passed the final critical piece of ethics reform in its effort to restore public trust in state government. This comprehensive reform legislation closes loopholes, strengthens penalties, and clarifies the state code of ethics. It includes the following:

State courts may revoke or reduce the retirement or other benefit of public officials or employees who commit certain job-related crimes; a public official's failure to report a bribe is now a class A misdemeanor; and the ban on campaign fundraising solicitation is extended to the governor's and the General Assembly's chiefs of staff. The State Code of Ethics is amended by limiting gift exceptions, extending the public official revolving door restrictions to state contractors, restricting the Office of State Ethics' (OSE) authority to issue subpoenas, and subjecting the governor's spouse to the code. Rules governing the OSE and the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board are clarified and tightened; the OSE must provide mandatory training to legislators on the Code of Ethics for Public Officials; and to promote transparency in government, public agencies must publicly post meeting dates, times, and minutes on available websites. (House Bill 6502, June Special Session)

CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM

In 2005 the General Assembly enacted landmark campaign finance reform legislation that established a voluntary public financing program. The program's goal is to significantly limit the amount of special interest money in campaigns. This year the legislature made improvements to the reform by expanding the office of State Elections Enforcement's authority, making administrative and technical changes, revising some aspects of the Citizens' Election Program to better serve participating candidates, banning client lobbyists from making contributions to a candidate during a legislative session, and eliminating obsolete provisions. (Public Act 08-02)

RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD PERSONS WHO WILL BE EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE AT THE NEXT REGULAR ELECTION TO VOTE IN PRIMARIES RELATED TO SUCH ELECTION

The success of our nation's democracy depends on the active participation of citizens. Encouraging more citizens to vote will help promote more participation. In 1971 the United States ratified the 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution to standardize the voting age to 18 years old. Connecticut further expanded the youth vote this year by passing a resolution proposing a Connecticut constitutional amendment allowing 17-year-old citizens who will turn 18 on or before the day of a regular election to vote in its primary. This resolution will be placed on the 2008 general election ballot for a vote by the voters of Connecticut. Allowing 17-year-olds to participate in primaries before their first general election can only increase young voter interest and their investment in the election process. By allowing 17-year-olds to vote in primaries, our state would send a decisive message supporting youth activism in our electoral process. (House Joint Resolution 21)