



Rep. Santiago leading the House Chamber in the Pledge of Allegiance

Dear Neighbor,

The state of Connecticut faced many challenges in 2013. I'm proud to have participated in a legislative session that successfully met those challenges and moved the state in a positive direction.

The legislature's response to the tragedy in Sandy Hook took center stage, but we also looked to our future and adopted a Comprehensive Energy Strategy (CES), invested in our flagship university, and worked to make our state more economically competitive by convening the Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE).

After Sandy Hook the legislature listened to Connecticut residents and worked in a bipartisan manner to improve firearm safety. Our comprehensive response also addresses school security and access to mental health services in an effort to prevent future firearm tragedies.

This session we gave seniors a choice in their long-term care through Aging in Place, assisted struggling homeowners by improving the foreclosure mediation process, and increased funding for affordable housing. Additionally, we increased penalties for those connected to human trafficking, passed laws to reduce incidents of racial profiling, and now every Connecticut resident can get a Connecticut driver's license.

I look forward to answering your questions about any issues facing our state.

Hilda E. Santiago

Hilda E. Santiago
State Representative



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HILDA E. SANTIAGO
PROUDLY SERVING MERIDEN | 84TH DISTRICT

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



PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
Permit No. 3937

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HILDA E. SANTIAGO
MERIDEN | 84TH DISTRICT



CAPITOL UPDATE 2013

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



INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE

Connecticut residents who earn minimum wage have gone three years without seeing an increase in their wages. While the economy recovers, workers who earn minimum wage are faced with price increases and are forced to make decisions about what is a priority to their families. This law allows these individuals to earn approximately \$900 more a year if they work full-time. By increasing the minimum wage the legislature is helping low wage earners and boosting local economies.

THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM

The Care 4 Kids program helps low- to moderate-income families in Connecticut pay for child care costs. This session we passed a law that expands the Care 4 Kids program to include those parents who are on maternity leave. This law requires the Department of Social Services to grant up to six weeks of continued eligibility for Care 4 Kids funding to mothers on maternity leave who take unpaid leave from their jobs, securing their current child's spot in the program, even when they are unable to work. This allows children in the program to maintain the positive relationships formed with their caregivers that promote healthy brain development and better health, emotional and academic outcomes.



Hilda Santiago, a Children's Champion, with David M. Nee (left), Executive Director, William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund and George Hensinger, CT Parent Power during the CT Early Childhood Alliance award presentation at the State Capitol

HOMEOWNER PROTECTION RIGHTS

The ability to own a home is part of the American dream, but financial hardship can threaten that dream for families, sending them to the brink of foreclosure. We worked hard this past session to protect homeowners and facilitate a fair and speedy foreclosure mediation process by passing An Act Concerning Homeowner Protection Rights. A more streamlined process helps both the banks and the homeowners come to a quicker solution to keep homeowners in their homes, while fulfilling their obligation to the bank or lender. The provisions include: At least three mediation sessions before referring a case to a judge; a requirement that banks mediate in good faith, which helps remove blighted properties from neighborhoods by shortening the foreclosure timelines for abandoned property; and requirements that the bank treat a homeowner's most recently submitted financial package as current which will end the burden of constant requests for new documents. Finally, the law provides the Department of Banking with the authority to create regulations that require banks to disclose various foreclosure related information.

INCREASING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Connecticut Housing Finance Authority is a quasi-state agency that creates affordable housing opportunities for individuals and families in the state. This law increases from \$1.5 billion to \$2.25 billion the amount of funds available for CHFA mortgage purchases and loans that are not guaranteed by certain state and federal entities. This allows CHFA to provide more mortgages, create construction jobs and boost economic activity in the state.

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

The newest version of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), which was released in May 2013, eliminates the formal diagnoses of Asperger's disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorders (both considered part of the autism spectrum). This change worries many doctors, therapists, patients and their families because it could create barriers to needed services. This law protects people previously diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders by allowing them to continue to qualify for statutorily required services on their private health insurance plans after the release of the DSM-V.



Rep. Hilda Santiago touting a \$150,652 grant heading to the city to help reduce youth violence through various targeted programs at the Meriden Police Department

THE MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH OF YOUTHS

This session we passed a law that works along with the gun violence, mental health and school safety bill we had passed earlier in the session. SB 972 strengthens the system we have in place here in Connecticut relating to children's mental health. Pediatricians will get more training about signs of mental health, seeking to reduce mental, emotional and behavioral health issues in children through more early identification and intervention. It also promotes better consistency between home visitation programs and public education campaign, asks the state to create a study of incarcerated youth with mental health issues, and creates a Children's Mental Health Task Force to look into these issues further.

EARLY VOTING

A constitutional amendment was passed this year regarding early voting. Now voters get to vote on this amendment on Election Day in November 2014. If passed, the amendment would change our state Constitution to allow registered voters to vote at designated polling places days before the election. The provision for no-excuse absentee balloting also means that the current restrictions on absentee balloting would be partially lifted. This is important to people who may have to work during voting hours on Election Day, or to people who simply cannot get to the polls. Voting rights are so important to our democracy and I am glad that our state is making it easier for people to exercise that constitutional right!

Si usted o algún conocido necesita una versión de este boletín en español, por favor llame a mi oficina.