

Dear Neighbor,

It has been an honor to represent you at the Capitol these past fifteen years. I have always enjoyed speaking with you and hearing your concerns. Knowing what is important to you is the main reason why I have worked so hard on some of the toughest challenges facing our state.

I have been a strong advocate for education, quality and affordable health care for everyone and as always your advocate for senior issues. I am proud of what I have been able to accomplish as the House Chair of the Aging Committee.

This newsletter touches on some of the main aspects of this session. If you would like further information on any of these bills you can call my aide, Dawn Niles, who will be happy to assist you.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve you. As always, if I can be of any assistance, please feel free to contact me at 240-8585.

Very truly yours,

Joe
Joseph C. Serra
State Representative



Rep. Serra with his granddaughter

Call me for your free copy of this year's laws affecting:

Children
Education
Seniors
Veterans

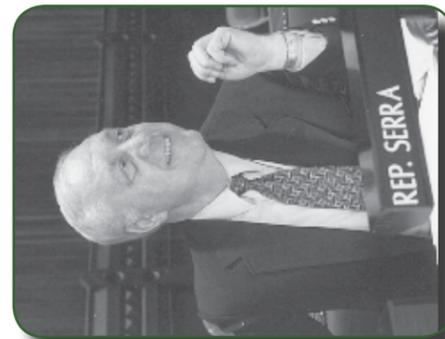
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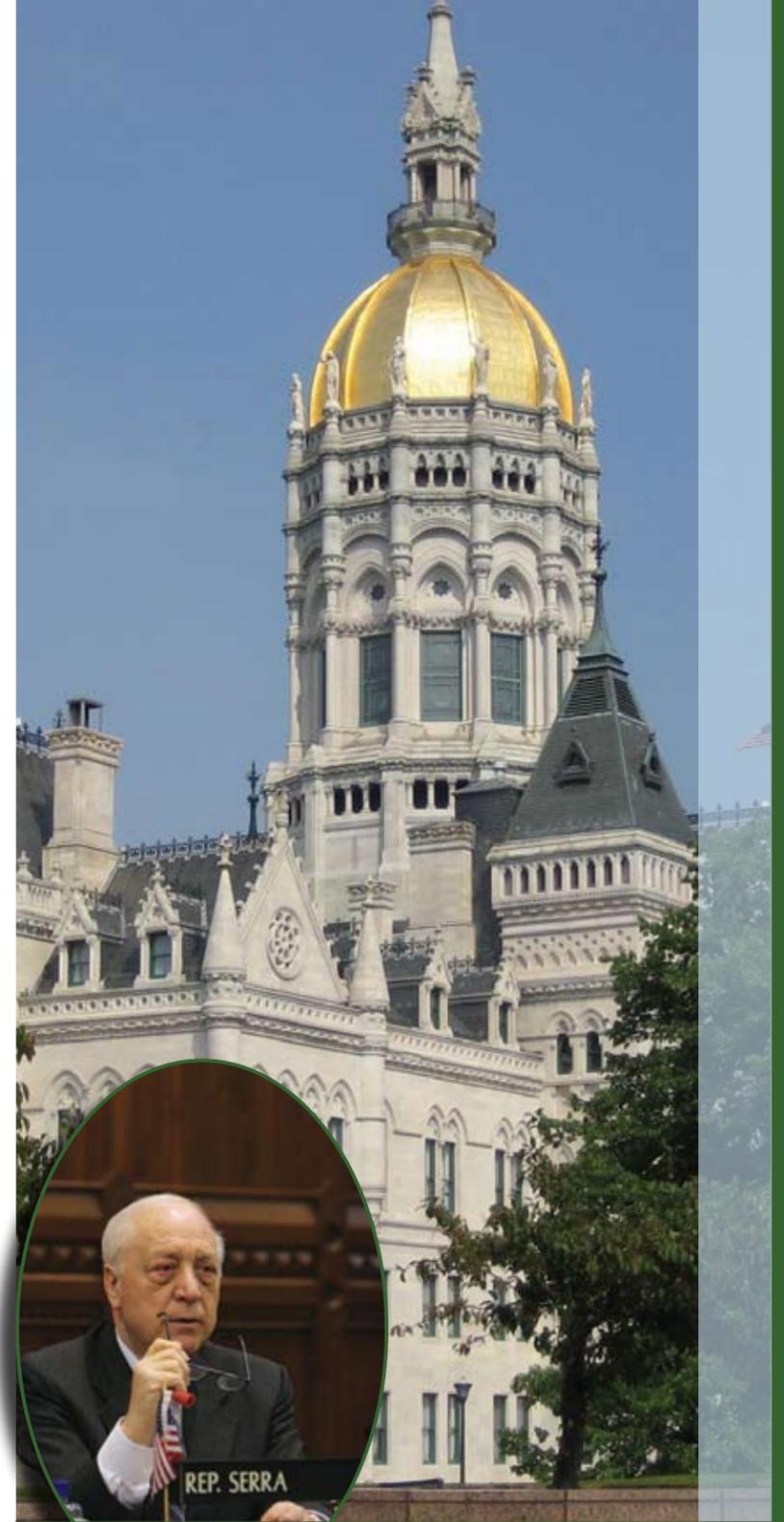


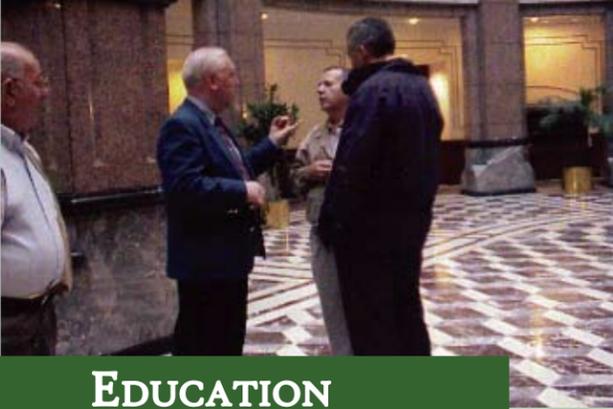
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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
**JOSEPH C.
SERRA**
REPRESENTING
MIDDLETOWN

2008 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE





EDUCATION

High School Credit for Language Courses

Many students are learning another language by taking advantage of high quality world language instruction outside of their public school. The General Assembly, recognizing the importance of supporting this effort, offered legislation which will allow them to receive high school credit for these classes. Students will be allowed up to four credits toward the foreign language requirement needed for high school graduation. To receive this credit, students will be required to pass a proficiency test for their language of study certified by the Commissioner of Education. PA 08-138

Establishing an Adult Literacy Board

In Connecticut and across the country, adult literacy is a significant issue with serious social and economic development implications. This bill aims at helping individuals (age sixteen and over who are not in a secondary school) to read, write and speak English, compute and solve problems at levels necessary to function both personally and professionally. To monitor the program, a newly established Adult Literacy Leadership Board will be charged with responsibilities which include reporting recommendations annually to the Governor and General Assembly, developing and maintaining an online site for adult literacy information, creating a mission statement, establishing performance measures, and preparing an annual state report on the status of adult literacy. Additionally, the Adult Literacy Leadership Board will be charged with developing a strategic plan. The plan seeks to develop a system-wide administration, improve the quality of instruction, provide financial support and other resources needed to implement certain goals. Finally, the Office of Workforce Competitiveness will establish the Adult Literacy Leadership Board as a standing committee of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission. The Office of Workforce Competitiveness is charged with applying for, receiving, and managing funding sources as well. PA 08-163

The Teaching of Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities

The number of children affected by autism continues to rise. Teachers and the professionals who work with them need to be properly and comprehensively trained to deal with growing classroom issues. To better address developmentally disabled students' needs we have passed legislation which seeks to improve the educational training we provide for teachers and paraprofessionals who deal with these students by gathering recommendations that incorporate effective teaching methods and professional development. PA 08-5

CONTINUING TO WORK FOR MIDDLETOWN



SENIORS



The Homecare Option Program for the Elderly (HOPE)

The Homecare Option Program for the Elderly (HOPE) offers participants who establish an individual savings account within this state-administered trust fund to provide beneficiaries with funds to pay for qualified home care expenses. Capital gains and dividends earned on contributions to these accounts are exempt from the designated account beneficiary's state income tax. Also, it expands those who benefit from the HOPE account to any beneficiary. Beneficiaries can withdraw funds from the account which would otherwise not be covered by long term health insurance or Medicare. PA 08-140

Support for Grandparents and Other Relative Caregivers

Many children, 4.7%, are living in grandparent-headed household in our state; another 1.5% are living with other relatives. Recognizing this special need, this bill gives the same rights to grandparents and other relative caregivers appointed through Superior Court, and who are not receiving subsidized guardianship or foster care payments from the Department of Children and Families (DCF). They will now be able to apply for grants under the Probate Court administered Kinship Fund and Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund. Previously, only guardians appointed through the Probate Court were able to receive financial support. Effective Date: July 1, 2008 PA 08-97

Telephone and Cable Installation Fees for Nursing Home Residents

This bill prohibits telephone and television cable providers from charging a fee when residents of nursing homes, residential care homes, or rest homes change rooms within the facility. It also prohibits the owner of the facility from charging a fee for these services when changing rooms. PA 08-15

Admission of Elderly Persons to Public and Subsidized Housing

Elderly who need to terminate their leases early upon being accepted to subsidized housing (after being on a waiting list) are faced with either losing their security deposits or other legal action when they terminate their leases early. To address this we have passed a new law, effective October 1, 2008, which will allow low-income seniors age 62 and older as well as certified disabled individuals who have applied for and been accepted into state or federal subsidized housing to terminate their existing lease or rental agreement without penalty if they provide 30 days written notice to their landlord. PA 08-93

HEALTH INITIATIVES

Expansion of the Pilot Program for Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders

In 2006 the legislature took action and established a 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 for two years. The program provides coordinated services and support, including case management. This bill expands, from 50 to 75, the number of people who can participate in the pilot. 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 extends the pilot's end date for nine months to June 30, 2009. PA 08-63

Continuing Care

Under previous state law, licensed continuing care facilities must provide health care to seniors. This care must take place only at the care facility and not in the home. To promote a comprehensive package of coordinated long term care service for seniors who wish to remain in their homes, the legislature passed a bill that not only guarantees senior citizens who need a full range of care a right to placement in a care facility, but also allows for services to take place in the individual's home. PA 08-36

Money Follows the Person Project

This bill will make sure the people who want to remain at home with their families can be cared for at a level that meets their needs. The Money Follows the Person program reduces reliance on institutional care and develops community-based long-term care opportunities. It will support elderly and disabled Medicaid recipients. Senate Bill 561 expands and improves this program by increasing from 700 to 5,000 the number of individuals who can be served under the program. PA 08-180

An Act Establishing a Minority Health Advisory Commission

The legislature took great strides in expanding quality, affordable health care for state residents. One of the key measures will be to establish the Commission on Health Equity. This commission will work with other state agencies, boards and commissions to eliminate the disparities in health status among the state's multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic communities. The legislature expects the commission will highlight the problems many underserved communities face when obtaining health care. PA 08-171