



# State Representative **JOSEPH SERRA**

### CHARTER OAK PASS (LIFE USE)

The Charter Oak Pass provides access to the State Parks and is available free to Connecticut residents, 65 years of age or older. The pass is accepted at all day use areas where a parking fee applies. Presenting it allows free access for the entering vehicle and passengers. The pass holder does not have to be the vehicle driver. Free admittance is also provided for the Charter Oak pass holder when visiting Gillette Castle, The Dinosaur Park and Fort Trumbull State Park, or fishing at the Quinebaug Valley Hatchery. A Charter Oak Pass may be obtained in person at the following locations: (Proof of age and residency required): DEP States Parks Division, 79 Elm Street, Hartford Monday-Friday 9:00 am – 3:00 pm 860.424.3200 or The Dinosaur State Park, West Street, Rocky Hill 9:00 – 4:30 pm (closed Mondays) 860.529.5816

### MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF FUND (PA 09-163)

This fund is used by the Military Department for grants to pay for essential personal or household goods or services in Connecticut, if there is a hardship. This bill makes immediate relatives of Connecticut Armed Forces members, including Connecticut National Guard members, eligible to receive benefits from the fund.

### HOME CARE PROGRAM FOR ELDERLY (PA 09-64)

Personal Care Assistants (PCAs) are an alternative to nursing homes. PCAs provide non-medical care such as assistance with bathing, dressing or eating. Participants would hire and manage their own assistants to help them with personal care and activities of daily living. Contact your Connecticut Department of Social Services Office.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

Did you know that although federal regulations prohibit automated sales calls to cell phone numbers, there is NO prohibition to making manually dialed telemarketing calls? To prevent this from happening, visit [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov) to register your cell number or call the national "Do Not Call" registry to block these calls from your cell phone by dialing 1.888.382.1222.

### AUTOMATIC EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS IN SCHOOLS (PA 09-94)

This legislature passed a bill that will require a school board to have an automatic external defibrillator (AED) at each school in its jurisdiction, if funding is available. School staff will be trained in its use and in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Schools will be able to accept donations of AED's or grants that will cover the cost of the AED's and training that needs to be provided. The bill also requires each school to develop emergency action response plans for school personnel to respond to those people experiencing cardiac arrest or similar life-threatening

emergencies. School athletic departments or programs must also develop an emergency action response plan to address appropriate school personnel response for people attending or participating in an athletic event or practice on school grounds. AED's have been shown to effectively help save a life of an individual experiencing a cardiac arrest emergency.



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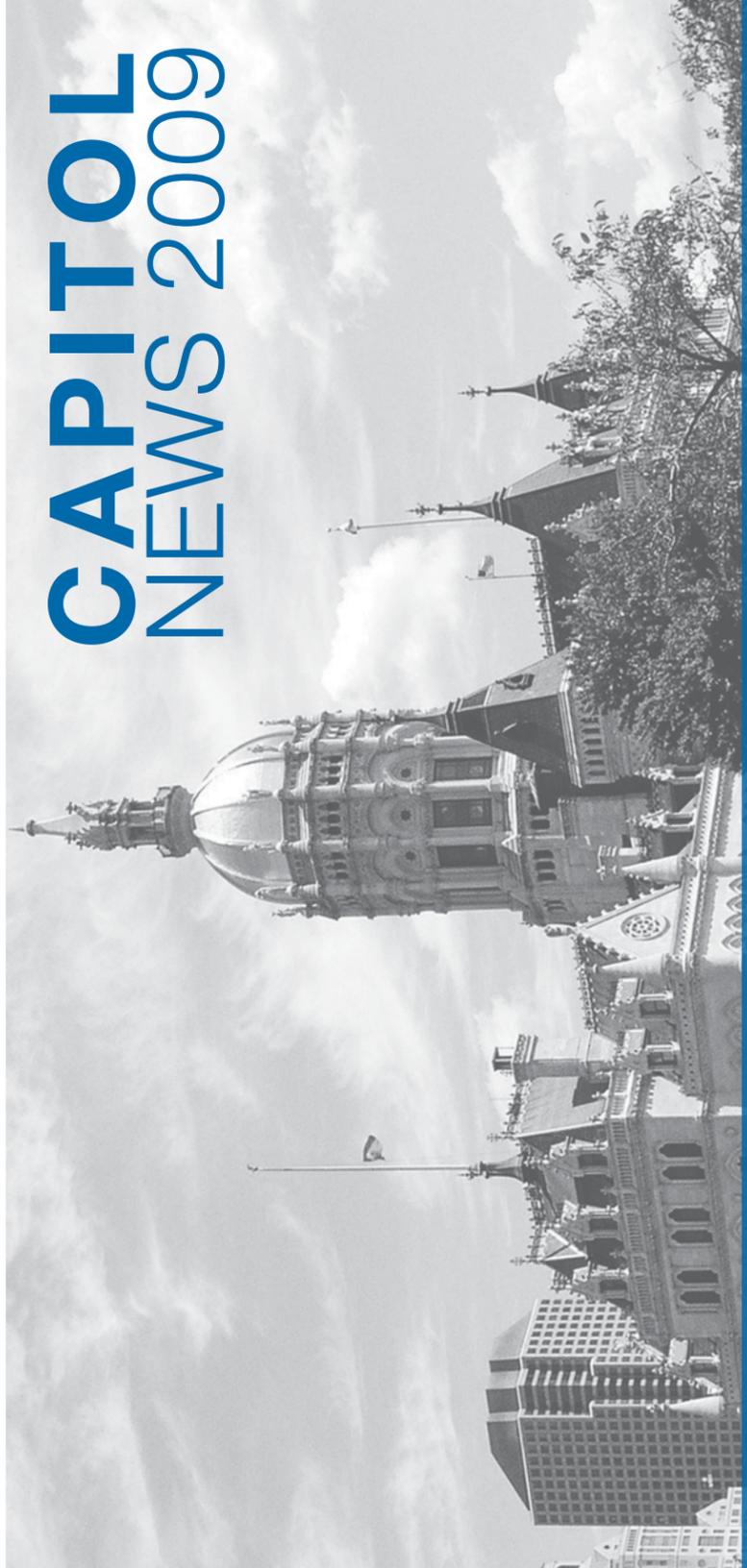


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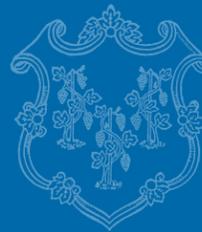


# CAPITOL NEWS 2009



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## Protecting Consumers

### EMERGENCY MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (PA 09-209)

Public Act 209 changes the process for determining eligibility for the Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program by allowing the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to determine what constitutes a significant reduction in a borrower's income and it expands the circumstances that constitute a financial hardship beyond a borrower's control and changes some of the conditions of repayment. This bill also allows borrowers to apply for the program before they receive notice of intent to foreclose under certain circumstances.

### IDENTITY THEFT (PA 09-239)

This session we passed new legislation that will provide greater protection for consumers as well as assist our law enforcement officials by giving them the necessary tools to apprehend and prosecute criminals of identity theft. This legislation will increase the penalty for criminal impersonation; create the crime of unlawful possession of personal access devices as well as allow a victim of identity theft to sue for damages if the perpetrator was found guilty of trafficking in personal identifying information. For a full list of changes please call my office for a copy of this important legislation.

### HOME CONTRACTORS (PA 09-18)

Every year home contractors receive the highest number of complaints at the Department of Consumer Protection. I believe that consumers deserve full disclosure of a contractor's business interest when they hire a contractor to work on their home. Public Act 09-18 requires home construction and home improvement contractors to disclose every corporation, limited liability company, partnership, sole proprietorship, or other legal entity that is or has been a home improvement or new home construction contractor in which they were shareholders, members, partners, or owners within the past five (5) years.

### HOME/BUSINESS OWNERS FIRE LOSSES (PA 09-164)

Public Act 164 shortens the time period that an insurer has regarding payment of a claim from 60 to 30 days. This allows an insured person to receive partial payments before a final settlement has been determined, and it increases the statute of limitations for the filing of a lawsuit arising from a claim from 12 to 18 months after such a loss.

### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE POLICIES (PA 09-98)

It came to our attention that some insurance companies are imposing a large cancellation fee for their automobile policies. Public Act 09-98 will prohibit car insurance companies from charging a cancellation fee of more than \$100.00. If an insurance company breaks the law, a fine of up to \$15,000.00 will incur for the company.

## Looking out for seniors

### SILVER ALERT SYSTEM (PA 09-109)

The Silver Alert program creates an emergency notification system for law enforcement agencies to broadcast local, regional, or statewide public alerts for missing seniors and other individuals with cognitive impairments, including Alzheimer's disease. Broadcasts may be issued using radio, television and electronic highway signs. These alerts were modeled after the federal Amber Alert system for abducted children.

### SENIOR CITIZEN DISCOUNT PROGRAMS (PA 09-53)

To help our seniors better take advantage of senior citizen discounts offered by business, we passed a new law to provide seniors with greater access to and understanding of these types of discount programs. The bill requires an individual, firm, or corporation that sells goods and services to the public and offers senior citizen discounts to disclose eligibility requirements by placing a sign at the point of a display, cash register, or store entrance stating the qualifying age and discount percentage or dollar amount.



## Veterans

### US FLAGS ON GRAVES (PA 09-5)

Connecticut understands the importance of paying respect to those who have sacrificed their lives so that we may enjoy the freedoms that we do today. This legislature took action to ensure that all of those who have lost their lives in battle be recognized by requiring that all cemeteries cannot restrict individuals from placing US flags on graves of veterans from the Saturday before Memorial Day through the Fourth of July.

## Healthcare

### AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (PA 09-115)

Autism (ASD) is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime. One in one-hundred and fifty individuals are diagnosed with ASD making it more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. This legislation requires insurance coverage of critical treatment and benefits that will greatly help the lives of people with ASD.

### BISPHENOL-A (PA 09-103)

Bisphenol-A is an industrial chemical used to make plastics found in beverage containers, protective food can linings, and plastic dinnerware. Laboratory studies have shown Bisphenol-A to have reproductive and developmental toxicity, therefore Connecticut will ban the sale, manufacture, or distribution of infant formula and baby food stored in containers, reusable food and beverage containers that are made with this product.

### PRESCRIPTION EYE DROP REFILLS (PA 09-136)

Insurance companies have denied coverage if prescription eye drops are used up prior to the 30 day renewal period, but they will now be prohibited from denying this coverage if certain conditions are met.

### LYME DISEASE (PA 09-128)

This bill will allow a physician to prescribe, administer, or dispense long-term antibiotic therapy to a patient for the purpose of eliminating infection or controlling symptoms if certain conditions are met.

### COVERAGE FOR STEPCHILDREN (PA 09-124)

Insurance companies have varying policies dealing with coverage for stepchildren. Public Act 09-124 requires stepchildren to be able to receive all the same benefits as biological children.

## Healthcare

### SUSTINET PLAN (PA 09-148)

The SustiNet plan lays out a framework for expanding high quality health care coverage to more of our residents. It will look at ways to contain cost and promote preventive care while laying the groundwork for federal healthcare reform. It will require a board of directors to produce recommendations on how to best take advantage of new federal reform legislation with 60 days of the passage of such legislation. This bill assigns this board with developing detailed recommendations on how to provide a high quality affordable benefit, similar to those currently offered in the state employee plan, to municipal, non-profit, and small business employers, a person without employer-sponsored insurance or insurance that is inadequate or unaffordable. One of the goals of this plan is to create multiple coverage pools and several benefit options. SustiNet is more than insurance coverage; it also will work on strategies for improving health care while aggressively attacking the increasing high cost of insurance.

## Looking out for our environment

### GREEN CLEANING PRODUCTS (PA 09-08)

New and improved green technology will make it possible to have a clean and healthier school, thus helping to protect our students and employees from a variety of health concerns that have been linked to toxic chemicals. School districts will be required to use cleaning products that meet guidelines or standards set by a national or international certification program approved by the Department of Administrative Services in consultation with the Environmental Protection Commissioner.

### MOVE OVER LAW (PA 09-121)

Motorist who are approaching one or more stationary emergency vehicles located on the travel lane, breakdown lane, or shoulder of a highway will be required to (1) immediately slow down to a reasonable speed below the posted speed limit, and (2) if traveling in the lane adjacent to the location of the emergency vehicle, move over one lane, unless this would be unreasonable or unsafe.



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