



News Briefs

Storm Response and Power Outages

- Utilities will be held to minimum performance standards for emergency preparation and response
- Noncompliance could result in penalties of up to 2.5 percent of an electric or gas company's annual distribution revenue, approximately \$25 million in the case of Connecticut Light & Power

Desecrating Veteran Memorials

Honoring the present and past sacrifices of our veterans is one of my highest priorities. It is shocking to see an increase in thefts and vandalism of veteran memorials. We increased penalties for desecrating veteran memorials beyond the monetary value of what was vandalized.

Prevent Sexual Violence On Campuses

This law protects students by requiring colleges and universities to adopt and disclose policies on sexual assault, giving students better tools to stay safe on campus.

"Caylee's Law"

This law is in response to the circumstances surrounding the death of Florida toddler Caylee Anthony, and applies to any parent, guardian or person who has custody or supervision of a child by setting criminal penalties for the failure to report the disappearance of a child.

Children with Special Needs

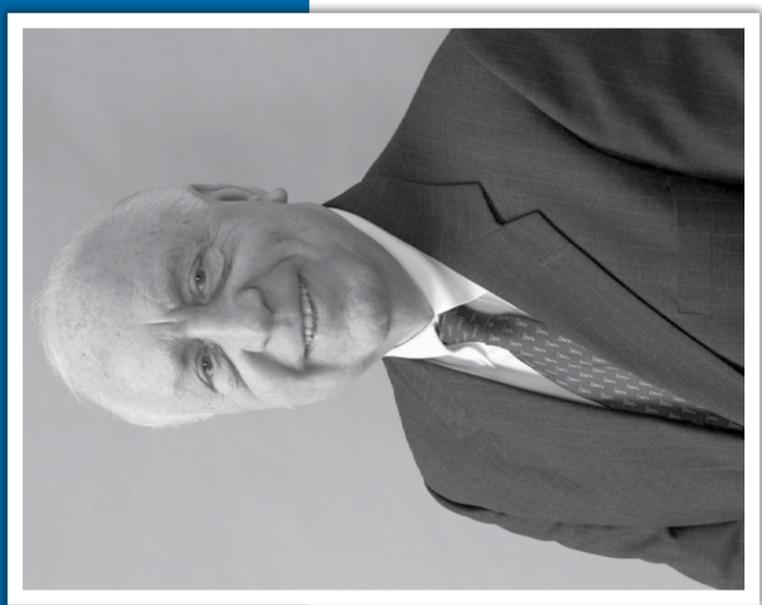
Several new laws offer protections and support of children with special needs. One improves the special education student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and another creates a study on workforce development, training and employment of young adults with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

State Representative

Joseph C. Serra

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CAPITOL UPDATE 2012

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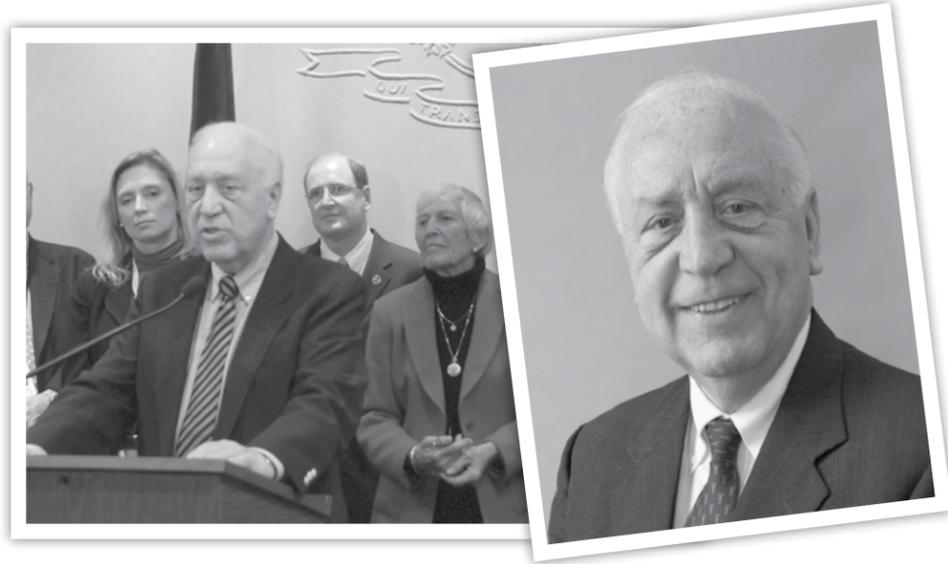
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State Representative

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As the Chair of the Grandparents Task Force and Co-Chair of the General Assembly's Aging Committee, I am happy to report that we passed what is considered major legislation dealing with visitation rights of grandparents. This act eases the judicial requirements and application process for a grandparent looking to be granted visitation rights. The application process shall confirm that (1) a parent-like relationship exists between the child and the grandparent; and (2) denial of the visitation would cause real and significant harm to the grandchild. The court must hold a hearing and grant the request if it finds clear and convincing evidence that all the conditions have been met.

Factors that will be considered in determining a parent like relationship include:

- The length of time of the relationship;
- Length of time that the relationship has been disrupted;
- The specific parent-like activities of the grandparent seeking visitation;
- Whether grandparent seeking visitation has unreasonably undermined the authority and discretion of the custodial parent;
- Significant absence of the parent from the minor's life;
- Death or physical separation of the minor's parents;
- Fitness of the petitioner and the custodial parent.

Nursing/Residential Care Facilities

We also addressed notification of nursing home facilities and managed residential communities if they are being placed into receivership or have an application for bankruptcy. They will be required to provide consumers with full disclosure of the current financial status of the nursing home or managed residential community so that consumers can make informed decisions about admission.

Public Safety

Move-Over Law

The current "move over" law applies to highways with three or more lanes. To ensure that our emergency personnel are protected we are now including two-lane highways. The law requires a motorist approaching a stationary emergency vehicle in a travel lane or shoulder of a highway to slow down to a reasonable speed, below the posted speed limit and to move over one lane if it is safe to do so. A violation is an infraction, unless the violation results in a injury or death of an emergency vehicle operator, in which case fines are a maximum of \$2,500 and \$10,000 respectively.

Silver Alert System

This bill is modeled after the federal Amber Alert system for abducted children, whereby alerts are broadcasted by radio, television, or electronic billboards. The Silver Alert system requires the Department of Public Safety to collect, process, maintain, and distribute information to help find missing seniors or mentally impaired adults. Now, a missing person's family can contact the public safety authorities directly, without putting the patient's facility at risk of breaching confidentiality safeguards. This expansion of this system will speed up the process of locating and safely returning a missing patient by extending the emergency notification to the media and general public without delay.

Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

The need for smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in residential buildings was brought to the forefront by the tragic fire in Stamford over the Christmas holidays. It compelled the legislature to review our smoke and carbon monoxide detector laws. The result is that all one-family homes must be equipped with smoke detectors and one and two-family homes must be equipped with carbon monoxide detection and warning equipment, unless they do not contain a fuel burning appliance, fireplace or attached garage. These detectors are required in any home undergoing interior construction or alteration under a burning permit. Smoke detectors must be installed in the basement and in each level of the dwelling as follows: outside of each separate sleeping area and on the ceiling of each stairway between levels.

Insurance

Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Advances in science have shown that early detection of breast cancer is the best defense against the disease. The law now requires insurance coverage for a comprehensive ultrasound screening and magnetic resonance imaging where a mammogram is insufficient in dense breast tissue screening. This will provide earlier detection of breast cancer.

Consumer News

State Park Campground Reservations

With the upcoming summer tourism season, it is important to accommodate the increasing number of visitors to our state beaches and parks. This bill prohibits leasing shore park camping sites to the same party for more than three weeks, unless the party leaves the park for at least five days between leases, or there are vacant sites available on a first come basis.

Charter Oak Pass (Life Use)

The Charter Oak Pass provides access to 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, 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 Dinosaur State Park, West Street, Rocky Hill 9:00 – 4:30 pm (closed Mondays) (860) 529-5816.

One Free Item - Retail Sales Law

The current "one free item" law will now include retail foods without bar codes, including ones that must be weighted at purchase. Current law, entitles consumers to receive an item for free, up to a \$20 value, if an electronic bar code scanner charges a price that is higher than the posted or advertised price. This applies only to stores with a retail sales area of more than 10,000 square feet.

Education Reform

Early Childhood Intervention

- 1,000 new pre-K school readiness seats
- Pilot program to enhance literacy for K-3rd grade

Addressing our Neediest Schools

- Requires at least 10 Family Resource Centers and 20 new or expanded School Based Health Centers in the education reform districts
- Increases funding for existing Family Resource Centers

School Funding

- Increased funding for vo-tech, vo-ag, charter and magnet schools
- Requires 2 of the next 4 state charter schools to be a dual language theme school
- Requires public schools to include a total of 20 minutes of physical exercise in a regular school day for grades K-5
- No changes in the education grant (ECS) formula
- Requires charter school grants to be added to ECS grants and paid through the towns where the schools are located