

TRANSPORTATION

Special Transportation Fund “Lock Box”

Connecticut’s transportation infrastructure woes, whether with I-95 or Metro North, are threatening the economic engine of the state – Fairfield County. I fought to end the practice of tapping the state Special Transportation Fund for general budget purposes. The Legislature passed a resolution this session that will assure the fund will be applied only to transportation projects going forward. I’m also collaborating with our congressional delegation to secure the federal funding needed to address the immediate fixes (such as the 100+ year old “Walk” bridge that keeps getting “stuck”) we so urgently need.



Rep. Steinberg at Saugatuck station forum with Metro North President Giulietti and Jim Marpe.

ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY REGULATIONS

In the last year, all state agencies performed a comprehensive review of their regulations to find those that are outdated, unnecessarily burdensome, inefficient, or ineffective. As a result, hundreds of pages of regulations that affect Connecticut businesses and residents will be rescinded. A new e-Regulations System offers a searchable online regulations database and will automatically generate alerts if interested parties register to be notified when a specific agency is in the process of creating or changing a regulation. PA 14-187

CHILDREN

Preventing Concussions in Young Athletes

Concussions have been rising at an alarming rate and even the NFL has recognized the health threat posed by failing to respond appropriately to symptoms.



Rep. Steinberg celebrating bill passage with Westport advocates and colleagues.

The Committee on Children heard heartbreaking testimony from coaches, parents and students – including a committed delegation of parents from Westport – on the potentially devastating effects on children of all ages.

I helped shape the final language for this bill, soliciting input both from parents and from those who run our youth sports programs locally. The State Board of Education, the Department of

Public Health and the state coaches association will now develop an education plan for student athletes, their parents and coaches. A new consent form will be distributed to parents and guardians to assure they are aware of the signs and proper responses to concussions. A taskforce will study occurrences of concussions state-wide, review best practices of other states and consider future legislative actions. PA 14-66

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
JONATHAN STEINBERG
PROUDLY SERVING WESTPORT | 136th DISTRICT
www.housedems.ct.gov/Steinberg

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Dear Neighbor:

I am pleased to share this update on the recently concluded legislative session. Each year brings a new set of challenges, and the 2014 session was no different. We further encouraged economic growth while protecting the health and safety of children, seniors and the environment.

One of my top priorities was to focus state and federal attention on the imperative of fixing our crumbling transportation infrastructure, both for Metro North and our aging highways. We took some initial steps to assure critical funding will be secured, but we still have much more to do.

We found a way to achieve a balanced budget with no new taxes, but many of us had to fight against budget gimmicks or one-time offsets. Daunting future budget challenges remain.

Working in a bipartisan manner, we were able make additional investments in job creation programs such as the STEP-UP program, which encourages employers to hire and train the unemployed, helping our economy continue its recovery.

I hope you find the enclosed information helpful and please feel free to call or email me for any reason — legislative or otherwise. It is my pleasure and honor to serve as your state representative.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Steinberg

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IN CONNECTICUT

Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Capitol: 800-842-8267
In District: 203-226-6749
www.housedems.ct.gov/Steinberg

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Electric Customer Consumer Protection

We heard from many state residents regarding predatory energy providers and confusing energy bills. Many consumers, who expected to pay less after signing up for low introductory rates, soon saw their rates jump and their bills soar.

The new law empowers customers by assuring more transparent billing practices and faster switching, and it prohibits coercive or deceptive sales practices. Energy suppliers can no longer offer consumers short-term “teaser” contracts with low rates, then switch to much higher variable rate contracts within weeks. Termination fees are now capped at \$50, and consumers can switch back to the standard rate charged by CL&P within 72 hours. PA 14-75

NO Fracking Waste in Connecticut

Much of the natural gas deposits nearby (the Marcellus Shale fields of Pennsylvania and New York) are being extracted via the controversial method of hydraulic fracturing, or

“fracking.” If New York State expands fracking, as may happen after fall elections, thousands of new wells will be drilled not far from our state line – each well generating millions of gallons of toxic and radioactive fracking waste.

I spearheaded the effort to protect the health and safety of our citizens from waste or byproducts shipped from other states (Connecticut doesn’t have natural gas deposits). The new law imposes a three-year moratorium on the distribution,

processing or use of any fracking waste product – including the use of fracking waste as a road de-icer – until the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection can promulgate stringent regulations. And, if the industry doesn’t cooperate in disclosing what’s in the waste, DEEP can keep the temporary ban in place indefinitely. The legislation also closes the federal loophole created by the industry so now fracking waste must be characterized as hazardous waste – as it obviously is – and subject to the state’s rigorous hazardous waste regs. PA 14-200

Developing a Water Plan for Connecticut

Connecticut is blessed with fairly abundant water resources compared to some states. But climate change, commercial expansion, and an aging local water delivery infrastructure pose threats to water availability, quality and recreation. That’s why I helped lead the effort to establish a comprehensive statewide strategic plan for the supply, distribution, quality, protection and conservation of our vital state resource. The Water Planning Council will prepare a state water plan for legislative review by January 2018. The WPC must seek input from stakeholder groups, consider planning activities already underway, and promote adoption of the state’s model water use restriction ordinance. Its recommendations must balance public water supply, economic, recreation, and ecological needs, and identify changes to laws or regulations necessary to implement the plan. PA 14-163



Rep. Steinberg at an event discussing the need to let parents know there could be toxic chemicals in Halloween costumes.



Rep. Steinberg at a press conference discussing the need to ban fracking waste in Connecticut.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JONATHAN STEINBERG

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OUR TAX DOLLARS COME BACK TO WESTPORT

The state has authorized \$3 million for completion of traffic reconfiguration work at the intersection of Route 33 and the Exit 41 ramp off the Merritt Parkway precipitated by the Westport/Weston YMCA project. This funding commitment by the state will assure that the traffic remediation promised by the Y is fully realized.

The Sasco Creek Apartments in Westport are expected to receive nearly \$9 million in state grant funds for 54 new units, a community building and infrastructure improvements.

Connecticut’s first state park will get a much-needed renovation, thanks to \$3.1 million in state grants. Sherwood Island State Park’s pavilion will see a new roof with solar panels for electricity and hot water. Plumbing and bathroom facilities will be updated, concession areas upgraded and landscaping work completed.

The Connecticut Arts Endowment Fund awarded \$13,269 in state funding to The Westport Arts Center, the Westport Country Playhouse, and Music Theatre of CT, Inc.



Rep. Steinberg with Westport Housing Authority Director Carol Martin, Governor Malloy and Lt. Governor Wyman.

JOB GROWTH

STEP UP Program

Connecticut’s unemployment rate remains higher than the national average. Matching the unemployed with job openings remains a challenge. That’s why I hosted a conference in Westport on a state program called STEP UP recently. The Legislature created the program in October of 2011 as part of the big Jobs bill.

STEP UP (Subsidized Training and Employment Program) is a bridge between job seekers and employers seeking to expand their businesses. Many businesses don’t have extra money to hire during this fragile economy or pay for specialized training. This program provides an incentive, in some cases providing special training paid for through grants. Over 2,000 jobs have been created across the state so far, with many more in the pipeline.



Rep. Steinberg hosting the STEP UP Conference in Westport.

CAPITOL UPDATE 2014



SENIORS

Helping Seniors Remain in Their Homes

Many seniors would prefer to live in their own homes for as long as possible. We funded a \$6 million grant program for home modifications and other assistive technology that will allow people to remain in their homes longer. The program is open to seniors and individuals with disabilities who are at risk of being unable to live independently without such modifications. PA 14-73

The Small House Nursing Home Pilot Program

There is a movement in Connecticut away from the traditional model of institutional nursing homes and toward an atmosphere that feels more like home. This model of smaller buildings with reconfigured layouts was first piloted in 2008 by the Jewish Home in Fairfield. We expanded the pilot program this session, based on its success. PA 14-95



Rep. Steinberg talking to seniors about Aging In Place initiatives.

Alzheimer’s Disease & Dementia Taskforce

The taskforce found that many professionals were insufficiently educated about these conditions, nor trained in how to best help. This session, we established mandatory Alzheimer’s and Dementia training for those that provide direct care to patients, such as EMTs, probate judges, paid conservators, protective services employees, nursing home staff, home health agencies, and assisted living agencies. PA 14-194

TAX REFORM

Ensuring an Equitable & Stable Tax Structure

Connecticut’s tax structure is complicated and volatile. The Legislature authorized a panel of experts to conduct a thorough review of all taxes imposed by the state and municipalities (including the income tax, sales tax, and property tax) to determine if each encourages economic growth, is fair and equitable, and is stable. I hope to use the panel’s recommendations to pursue fundamental tax reform. PA 14-47



Rep. Steinberg talking with colleagues on the floor of the House of Representatives.



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