

Dear Friends,

The 2024 “short session” was more abbreviated than usual. The governor and the legislature agreed not to reopen the biennial budget we established last year, something we haven’t done in quite some time. Virtually the only incremental spending came from remaining federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) programs which we invested primarily in education and nonprofit funding where it was sorely needed.

The other consequence was that quite a few big bills didn’t move forward this session because there was no incremental funding to pay for them. Good initiatives got public hearings but never made it through the appropriations process. It was pretty frustrating!

Some of my colleagues lamented the constraints of the fiscal guardrails we put in place in 2017, saying that economic conditions have changed, particularly inflation. But, as a major proponent of the compromises which led to the bipartisan budget accord, I worked hard to defend their continued value. Thanks to this fiscal discipline we imposed, our Rainy Day Fund is full at nearly \$4 billion, we’ve paid down about \$8 billion in pension debt – the state’s biggest fiscal challenge – and saved CT over \$700 million annually. Our bond rating continues to be upgraded.

The guardrails are set to expire fairly soon. You can count on me to make sure we keep them in place and keep the state on the right path to fiscal stability.

I’ve highlighted a number of bills that did become law, and a few that came close, including those I spearheaded as House chair of the Energy & Technology Committee. It was still a productive session.

As usual, there’s still much more to do. But there’s always next year!

Hoping that you and yours are doing well.



## STATE REPRESENTATIVE **JONATHAN STEINBERG** PROUDLY SERVING WESTPORT

## CAPITOL UPDATE **24**

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## CAPITOL UPDATE **2024**

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# STATE REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN STEINBERG

## CAPITOL UPDATE 2024



### HEALTHCARE MATTERS

We extended COVID-era telehealth laws which have changed the face of healthcare delivery, further banned the use of products with the “evergreen” chemical PFAS, further supported children’s mental health, and helped seniors age in place gracefully.

- \* **PA 24-110:** We made permanent telehealth laws created during the pandemic which have been a huge boon to seniors, children, and a number of patients with access issues, while instituting good practice rules.
- \* **PA 24-59:** We further extended bans on products containing PFAS beyond firefighting foam to include several consumer products.
- \* **PA 24-19:** Following the landmark mental health legislation we passed two years ago, we continued to invest in prevention, treatment, and support services to improve patient access and educate the mental healthcare professionals of the future.
- \* **PA 24-39:** We expedited Medicaid coverage for home-based care, created a new registry system to connect patients to home care providers, and created a dashboard to help navigate nursing home options when necessary.

### CHARTING OUR ENERGY FUTURE

As the state continues to contend with high electricity rates, we made efforts to expand supply and assure that utilities’ infrastructure projects include public input and good process.

- **PA 24-31:** This year’s solar bills ended up with modest expectations, but set the stage for expanding solar power, including at schools and wherever solar canopies might be feasible. It also tasked PURA to investigate changes to the state’s current incentive programs to take solar installations to the next level. We also promoted hydropower and offshore wind initiatives.
- **PA 24-144:** Five legislative committees worked with the Administration to fashion a strengthened Siting Council, charged with approving new infrastructure from power lines to cell towers. While assuring that the council follows good process in incorporating local considerations in its decisions, it also requires the utilities to disclose critical information used to plan their projects, including siting alternatives.



### FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

- \* We maintained discipline by not reopening the biennial budget, using only remaining ARPA funds for increased support of education and nonprofits
- \* Maintained the budget with last year’s historic tax cuts
- \* Added over \$1 billion to the Rainy Day Fund, now totaling almost \$4 billion
- \* Paid down more pension debt, bringing total to over \$8 billion paid down in recent years, saving over \$700 million annually

### GOOD BILLS THAT DIDN’T MAKE IT

Thanks to budget limitations and filibusters in the Senate, several important bills which passed in the House didn’t make it to the governor’s desk. We expect these initiatives to be taken up again next session.

- **HB 5004/SB 11:** These environmental bills, one initially dubbed “The Green Monster,” ended up as reasonable if scaled-down bills which would have promoted the state’s zero-carbon and clean energy goals.
- **HB 5390: {Work, Live, Ride}:** A more modest initiative than some past affordable housing bills, it encouraged increased multifamily housing development near transit hubs, where the need for cars would be reduced. Accompanying legislation promoted the kind of “middle housing” that Westport has embraced in planning for housing in town.

