

# CAPITOL UPDATE 2007

PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
HARTFORD, CT  
PERMIT NO. 3937

Dear Neighbor;

We had a very active session in 2007 and made some really positive strides for our children, seniors and working families. I am encouraged by specific gains in the areas of health care funding, protecting our environment, transportation, and Results Based Accountability. In addition, we committed funds to protect the pensions of retired teachers, continued paying down the state debt and put millions away for future "rainy days".

I was pleased by the response to my survey and take very seriously all your concerns. The top five were: Energy Costs, Property Taxes, Global Warming, Health Care, and Affordable Housing for our children.

It is a privilege to be your representative in the General Assembly and, as always, I welcome your comments and concerns. Please feel free to contact me at home at 535-4868, at the Capitol at 1-800-842-8267 or by e-mail at [Diana.Urban@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Diana.Urban@cga.ct.gov).

Sincerely

*Diana*



Rep. Urban and Rep. Merrill accept the Results Based Accountability Award with legislators, staff and Secretary Genuario from the Office of Policy and Management.

## State Representative Diana S. Urban

Legislative Office Building, Room 4057  
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

[Diana.Urban@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Diana.Urban@cga.ct.gov)  
1-800-842-8267



CALL ME FOR YOUR FREE  
COPY OF THIS YEAR'S:

Laws For Seniors • Education Laws  
Environment Laws  
Major Public Acts • Laws for Businesses

... but my  
commitment  
to You  
remains.

State Representative  
Diana S. Urban

PROUDLY SERVING  
Stonington and North Stonington - 43rd DISTRICT



Some things  
may have  
changed...

## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

As you know, I have always worked hard on environmental issues because I believe the environment impacts so many facets of our lives. From our children's health to family farms and open spaces, the way we handle environmental issues will effect generations to come. Many of you recognized this by making Global Warming your number three concern on my survey. I co-sponsored a number of bills to protect the environment:

### Making Schools and Playgrounds Safer

Recognizing that pesticides can have a deleterious effect on children, we expanded the ban on pesticides to playgrounds and all elementary and middle school playing fields as well as banning the use of toxic cleaners in state-owned buildings.

### Keeping the Air Clean

In order to ensure a healthier environment for our children and families, we took a major step forward this year by requiring certain full-sized school buses to be retrofitted with new pollution control systems to reduce particulate matter (better known as soot) which is a major contributor to respiratory illness and heart attacks. The legislature also made all vehicles that average more than 40 miles per gallon exempt from state sales tax, so now is a good time to purchase a fuel efficient vehicle and help with carbon emissions.

### Recycling Electronic Devices

Electronic waste such as discarded televisions and computers can contain lead, mercury, and other chemicals that can damage internal organs and cause developmental problems. This session we required manufacturers to establish, run, and finance the collection, transportation, and recycling of electronic devices.

### Open Space, Family Farms and Smart Growth

We passed several bills aimed at preserving our family farms, protecting key natural resources throughout the state, and encouraging smart growth. Central to this is the commitment to tie affordable housing funding to economic plans linked to Plans of Conservation and Development and a stream of funding for protection of historic and natural resources and farmland preservation.

### No Mandates for Storm Shutters

Insurers can no longer require installation of expensive storm shutters as a condition of issuing or renewing a homeowners policy and must offer premium discounts if permanent storm shutters or impact resistant glass are installed. In addition, the Insurance Commissioner is authorized to establish a program to help coastal area residents obtain homeowners insurance.

### ADDITIONAL STATE MONEY FOR OUR DISTRICT

I was pleased to be able to secure \$30,000 for Mystic Area Shelter and Hospitality (MASH) to assist with their on-going mission to help families that find themselves in crisis with no place to live.

I also worked hard with our municipal officials to get \$1 million from the Community Development Block Grant Program for a Senior Center at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center.



## HEALTH CARE

Access to affordable health care was the number four concern on my survey and one I continue to work on for our families and our small businesses. This session we accomplished some important things.

- Raise from 23 to 26 the eligible age for young adults covered under their parent's insurance.
- Automatically enroll eligible newborns in HUSKY.
- Make lead screening mandatory for all Connecticut children up to age 3.
- Permit and fund a number of school and community based health centers - Your number two recommendation on my survey.
- Mandate that a reinsurance association sell health care plans to small employees with low income workers.
- Significantly expand HUSKY coverage. To see if you or your child qualify, call 1-877-CT-HUSKY.

## ANIMAL ISSUES - CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

I am a firm believer in the cycle of violence which recognizes that violence often begins with animal abuse and then the abuser moves on to child abuse, domestic violence and other criminal activity. In fact the FBI uses animal abuse as one of four indicators of future violent behavior. With that in mind, I was happy to introduce legislation that extends restraining orders to pets of domestic violence victims. Violence and cruelty to pets is often used to control a victim and, although I recognize that restraining orders are hard to enforce, the fact that they are there can act as a significant deterrent.

I also reintroduced the Humane Education Bill and got it successfully out of committee and through the Senate but it died on the floor of the House. I intend to bring it back again next session as it addresses not only animal abuse but bullying behavior as well.

## ADDRESSING EMINENT DOMAIN

I received many calls about eminent domain and I am happy that the General Assembly took action this year by tightening the rules for taking property for redevelopment. A central component to a new list of requirements is that all redevelopment plans must now receive a public hearing and must be approved by a municipality's legislative body by a two-thirds vote.

## RESULTS BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

In my continuing efforts to bring accountability, efficiency, and transparency to state government, I am pleased to report that we were able to impact the budget by getting agencies to plan together and change their requests based on thorough reviews by the Subcommittees of the Appropriations Committee. Funds were moved to more efficient use and, in one case, \$20 million was cut from a program that was not achieving the desired results. We were also successful in getting language in the back of the budget which assures that all new programs will be required to use Results Based Accountability.

I was also thrilled that Connecticut received the Con Hogan Award from the National Council of State Legislatures for our innovative work on Results Based Accountability.

### **ENERGY (Survey says...this was your #1 concern)**

We passed a bill that did some great things for efficiency and renewable energy. Among them are:

- Restoring ratepayer funds devoted to energy efficiency and renewable energy (you might remember that I and like minded colleagues fought hard to stop that fund from originally being raided!);
- Expanding green building requirements for new construction;
- Increasing the proportion of electricity that must come from renewable sources;
- Exempting solar and geothermal energy technologies from sales and property tax.

Unfortunately, the bill did nothing to remedy the root cost of our high electric prices (now the highest in the continental US).

Currently our market relies on for-profit private companies and market forces to produce the electricity we need. These companies are profit maximizers and have no incentive to create more supply or to bring down prices. The bill addressed the demand side but left the supply side alone. In order to bring down prices we needed to reassert some control over the supply and, absent doing that, we will continue to pay more for electricity than we should. I and like minded colleagues offered an amendment to fix this problem but vested interests prevented it from passing and, even though the bill had many positive attributes without fixing the price problem, I felt I had to vote against it. I will be bringing back my concerns next session and am working on educating fellow legislators and building an alliance to lower prices.