

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JOE VERRENGIA

PROUDLY SERVING WEST HARTFORD - 20TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



Dear Neighbor:

I remain committed to working toward a leaner and more efficient government, while ensuring the protection of our most vulnerable citizens and keeping essential services properly funded.

First and foremost was crafting a responsible, balanced budget that protects community services and creates sustainable, long-term economic growth. I was happy to support key legislation including affordable education, maintaining and creating new jobs, promoting economic development, lowering energy costs and improving chronic disease care coordination.

As always I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your past emails, correspondence and visits to my office. Please do not hesitate to call or email me with your input.

Sincerely,

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CAPITOL UPDATE 2014

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Rep. Verrengia meeting with local manufacturing companies



Unveiling of the Connecticut law enforcement memorial kiosk at the Capitol

BUDGET 2015

The legislature passed a balanced budget that protects working families, gives more support to our cities and towns, does not raise taxes and remains under the spending cap. While accomplishing this goal, we were still able to make many strategic investments and provide additional funding to our municipalities.

This budget provides long-term tax relief for our residents. Teachers' pensions will begin to see an income tax exemption. We also added dollars to strengthen mental health services in the state and offer more access to services for victims of rape and sexual assault.

Our budget provides to West Hartford a combined total of approximately \$22 million in state aid, which is \$800,000 more in state aid than last year.

CREATING A SPECIAL NEEDS CAUCUS

We formed the first Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Caucus in the nation to create a stronger voice for those families involved. We worked closely with the Department of Developmental Services, The ARC of Connecticut and many advocates to improve the quality of care to our residents with IDD.

WEST HARTFORD GRANTS - FISCAL YEAR 2015

Adult Education	\$132,422
Colleges and Hospitals PILOT	\$1,102,492
Education Cost Sharing	\$18,181,174
Local Capital Improvement Program	\$459,237
Bonded MRSA Payments	\$757,839
Non-Public School Transportation	\$96,124
Pequot/Mohegan Grant	\$222,394
Public School Transportation	\$256,021
State Owned Pilot	\$300,798
Town Aid Road	\$689,311
Total West Hartford Funds In 2015	\$22,197,812
Total West Hartford Funds In 2014	\$21,360,356
Increased Funds From 2014-2015	\$837,456

INVESTMENTS AND JOBS IN MANUFACTURING

Connecticut is a leader in advanced manufacturing. Our largest private employer, United Technologies Corp. (UTC), will spend up to \$500 million over the next five years to upgrade and expand its aerospace research and development and manufacturing facilities, as well as up to \$4 billion in research and other capital improvements. This will not only maintain UTC jobs, but will positively impact all of the small businesses that serve as direct suppliers to UTC.

We continued to invest in small shops as well, through programs like the Manufacturing Reinvestment Account (MRA). The MRA is designed to help small manufacturers fund capital investments.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

We have already created a Do Not Call List to address unwanted sales pitches at home and on our cell phones, but some companies continue to make unwanted calls. This law increases the penalty for violating the Do Not Call list to \$20,000 from \$11,000. In addition, we added text messages to the Do Not Call List. To add your name to the National Do Not Call List you can register at this webpage, <https://www.donotcall.gov/>

PROTECTING ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS

This year, we tackled the problem of spikes in energy rates, which we heard about from many state residents. More transparent billing practices, faster company switching and prohibitions of coercive and deceptive sales practices, will empower consumers.

Energy suppliers will now be prohibited from offering consumers short-term "teaser" energy contracts with low rates, then switching to much higher variable rate contracts within weeks. Also, a consumer could switch back to the standard rate charged by UI or CL&P within 72 hours.

THE NEW OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early education is critical to a child's development, providing a solid foundation for future learning. This year, we formally established the Office of Early Childhood, which will develop a plan to improve access to preschool programs and achieve universal pre-kindergarten in Connecticut. It will administer programs and funding that affect our children from birth until elementary school.

Pre-kindergarten helps prepare children for grade school, academically and socially, and is a great long-term investment for taxpayers. It not only increases the chances of future success in and out of the classroom, but helps meet the ongoing challenge of providing equal educational opportunity to every child.

NEW LAWS AGAINST "KNOCKOUT GAME"

I introduced first-in-the-nation legislation that better protects assault victims from unprovoked assailants. There's a new troubling and dangerous malicious act called the "knockout game." The objective is to strike a person with so much force that the unsuspecting person falls unconscious, unable to protect him/herself. In accounts from victims and as seen in video evidence, these attacks come unprovoked and are irrespective of age, with seniors being some of the victims of this vicious "game."

I was proud to champion new legislation that sent a strong message to those persons interested in perpetrating this kind of attack on another human being by further criminalizing the act. If a person is found to be guilty of participating in this potentially deadly activity they will be subject to a charge of assault in the second degree, which is a class D felony.

PROTECTING PEDESTRIANS AND ROADSIDE WORKERS

In 2008, the legislature created the Highway Work Safety Zone - toughening the penalties on careless drivers and protecting our roadside workers and police. This session, we strengthened protections for highway workers as well as for pedestrians and cyclists. If a driver unreasonably endangers or injures these "vulnerable users" of public ways, they will face a fine up to \$1,000 in addition to any other charges they may face.

PUTTING YOUR HEALTH FIRST

We passed a new law that limits co-pays for breast ultrasound screenings and occupational therapy, two important services that lower long-term costs and improve outcomes. Health insurance policies that are required to provide ultrasound coverage will be prohibited from imposing a copayment of more than \$20 for breast ultrasound screening.

VETERANS' OPPORTUNITY FUND

Our veterans and those serving in the military deserve all the support we can provide. We created the Veterans' Opportunities Pilot Program, which provides grants to nonprofit housing agencies to hire job placement specialists trained in veterans' issues and establish a statewide coordinator to manage the network of employment services for veterans to re-enter the workforce.

