



Joe secured funding for improvements to the bridge overpass in the New Park Avenue area of town.

Dear Neighbor,

I am pleased to share with you this update on the recently concluded legislative session.

Each year brings a new set of challenges, and the 2015 session was no different. In the face of a significant budget deficit and the need to encourage economic growth, my colleagues and I have passed a balanced budget that provides the framework for a once-in-a-generation investment in our transportation infrastructure, which will spur more growth in our economy and create thousands of jobs. The result of all this will improve quality of life for residents who use our roads and rail system.

I take great pride in two recent infrastructure projects, which I was actively involved in securing for West Hartford, that will increase safety and add to the beauty for which our town is justly renowned.

The first project includes safety improvements to the area of I-84 known as the "S-Curves." The improvements are an effort to reduce the number of accidents that have only grown more common in that area of the highway.

Secondly, the Department of Transportation (DOT) has granted funding for aesthetic improvements to the bridge on New Britain Ave, a bridge that over the years has become an eyesore.

I hope you find the enclosed information helpful and will 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 and I welcome the opportunity to hear from you.

Sincerely,

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
JOE VERRENGIA

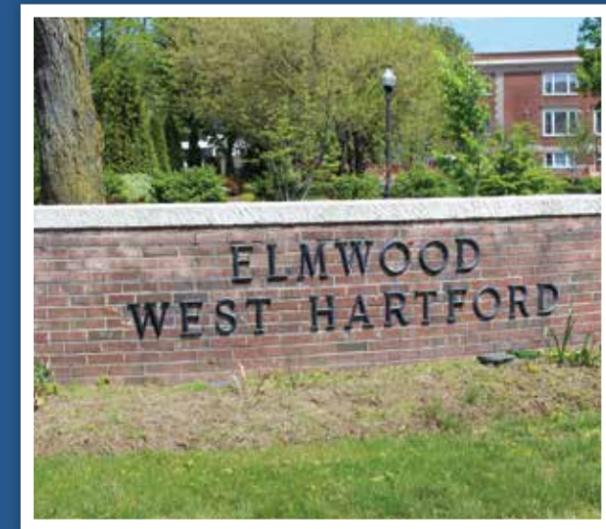
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CAPITOL UPDATE 2015



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DELIVERING FOR CONNECTICUT'S MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES

We worked to adopt a budget that represents the wide-ranging priorities of our diverse state, and sets us on a path that encourages continued economic growth. We protect hard-working, middle-class families by providing property tax relief through additional aid to our communities, and fund vital services people rely on every day.

The budget is balanced, under the spending cap, and invests in Connecticut's transportation infrastructure, which is critical to our future economy. By investing in transportation projects, such as the allocation of appropriate funding for interstate highway reconstruction, roads, bridges, and ports, we are encouraging smart growth, addressing traffic congestion, and bringing sustainable jobs home to Connecticut.

PROPERTY TAX REFORM

The legislature passed a bill that caps the car tax mill rate statewide at 32 mills for 2016 and 29.36 mills for 2017. No one's car tax will surpass these rates under this plan.



In addition, increased state aid for every city and town will allow municipalities to lower their mill rates. Effective July 1, 2016, certain residential properties owned by larger non-profit hospitals or private colleges will be added to a town's tax roll which will help pay for services they use (e.g. police, fire and public works departments). This lessens the property tax burden currently borne solely by families and small businesses in our communities.

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PROTECTING THE ELDERLY

This legislative year, we passed many more laws to protect our seniors from potential abuse. In situations where abuse or neglect is suspected, the Department of Social Services can now petition a probate court to gain access to that person's home to make an assessment. For the purpose of these investigations, the definition of neglect has also been expanded to include elderly people who do not live alone, but whose caretaker fails to arrange for the necessary services to keep an elderly person healthy. We also passed laws that will keep nursing home and residential care home residents safer by requiring the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services to notify a resident's designee of suspected abuse or neglect within 24 hours.

REGULATING ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS

The introduction of electronic cigarettes has raised concerns over the health risks and negative effects of exposing children to these devices in settings where tobacco smoking is currently banned by law. This bill brings electronic cigarettes and associated devices in line with existing restrictions on smoking, banning them in state buildings, restaurants, places serving alcohol, and healthcare facilities. Tobacco bars and other designated areas are exempt from the restrictions.

HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES

This year we allocated more funds for the highly successful Small Business Express Program. We are also requiring the Department of Economic and Community Development to dedicate funds to develop a program for construction projects for minority business enterprises. These moves will create jobs and better economic opportunities for Connecticut families.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Not all students are successful in a mainstream school environment, but all students are entitled to a quality education. However, students enrolled in alternative education programs don't always have access to the same resources as mainstream students. This leads to a lack of consistency in these programs. This legislation creates more accountability by developing goals and standards, improving performance reporting both locally and at the state level. The State Department of Education will now be required to audit certain alternative education programs. This law also provides more flexibility to towns by allowing districts to set up programs within existing schools. Under this legislation, two or more towns will now be able to work together to provide their students with alternative education.

A SECOND CHANCE SOCIETY

Connecticut's drug policies have swelled our prisons with nonviolent drug offenders who struggle to reintegrate into society upon release. The Second Chance Society will ensure public safety, and help end the culture of mass incarceration by lowering sentencing for nonviolent offenses. The Second Chance Society will give ex-offenders more opportunity to get back into the workforce – and will also save millions in taxpayer dollars.