

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

TONI E. WALKER

PROUDLY SERVING THE 93RD HOUSE DISTRICT | NEW HAVEN

Dear Friend,

I hope you are enjoying being a part of our great Elm City. 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. Despite a serious budget deficit and the need to encourage economic growth, my colleagues and I passed a balanced budget that provides property and car tax relief for middle-class families and small businesses, consumer protections and programs that empowers Connecticut families. It is vital to keep our funding promise to cities and municipalities.

We also created 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.

In addition to delivering property and car tax relief, we passed legislation that will continue to improve our city. In New Haven, we have funded many afterschool and summer youth programs. As your legislator, I am always fighting to improve our city. We have restored critical funding to job training as well as sustainable energy. Investments in youth violence prevention and protecting arts and humanities, continues to be a proud accomplishment for our community.

I hope you continue to read and learn more about this legislative session. It is my pleasure to serve you and your loved ones. I look forward to us working hard together and making a better future for ourselves and our families.

Best Wishes,



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CRITICAL FUNDING RESTORED

Youth Violence Prevention

In an effort to address youth violence in our urban communities and across the state, we provided additional funds to organizations and agencies that engage our children in anti-violence services and programs. New Haven will bring in **\$500,000** in funding for Youth Violence Prevention in fiscal years 2015 and 2016.



EDUCATION

Two Generational Plan

This two generational policy provides services and assistance to both parents and children. The focus is on learning, work and family strength. Components often include family support, access to quality infant and preschool settings, hybrid models of work and education, leading to an employment path with a reasonable wage. A parent’s literacy level is the number one indicator of a child’s literacy level. Helping parents attain literacy and work skills offers families a pathway to the American Dream. New Haven is one of six pilot communities for “Two-Gen” in the state.

Student Loan Rates Drop

In a historic step towards increasing college affordability, the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) announced that it will offer a fixed interest rate of 4.95% for new student loans, down from its current rate of 6.75%. Not only is this the lowest rate that CHESLA has ever offered, it is also significantly lower than the new Federal PLUS loan rate of 6.84%.

HEALTHCARE

Reducing The Costs of Long-Term Disability

The costs of long-term disability can be astronomical, and many who suffer from these disabilities end up on state or federal assistance. This session, we passed a law that allows for tax-free savings accounts that will help individuals and families pay for certain expenses related to their disability. Anyone can contribute to this account. Under this new law, money set aside in these accounts for critical expenses like education, housing, and transportation will not be considered when applying for various programs such as Medicaid or need-based financial aid for college. This new program will allow low-income families who have savings designated for a disabled relative, but are still in need of services, to obtain these critical services for their loved one.

STATE AID TO NEW HAVEN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2016 & 2017

Education Cost Sharing	\$310,657,240
Priority School Districts	\$12,762,658
PILOT: State Owned Property	\$13,872,778
PILOT: Colleges & Hospitals	\$85,367,135
Pequot/Mohegan Revenue Sharing	\$12,853,559
School Transportation	\$4,554,446
Local Capital Improvement Program	\$3,297,336
Town Aid Roads	\$2,502,664
Adult Education	\$5,597,351
Increased PILOT and Additional Sales Tax Revenue	\$15,361,235
TOTAL:	\$451,465,167

Patient-Designated Caregivers

Some patients end up returning to the hospital soon after discharge because they had not been instructed properly on their follow-up care or were unable to follow instructions. A new law, the CARE, (Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable) Act, requires a hospital to document a caregiver in the patient’s discharge plan, designated by the patient. They must attempt to notify the caregiver of the patient’s discharge, and to instruct the caregiver on any post-discharge tasks with which the patient will need assistance.

Protecting Community Services

Essential funding for families that need it most were protected, including social services, libraries, before-and after-school programs, mental health services, developmental services, and state parks. Programs like Solar Youth, New Haven Reads and New Haven Works can continue to benefit our community with these funds.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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.

Fair Treatment for Juveniles in the Criminal Justice System

New brain science and sociological studies show that the brains of young people are more susceptible to negative influences than the brains of adults. This has led to recent U.S. and Connecticut Supreme Court decisions limiting the application of adult sentencing rules to juveniles. Two laws this year address this issue. Criminal courts will now be required to consider evidence showing the difference between juvenile and adult brain development when sentencing for certain felonies committed prior to reaching 18 years of age, and requires that those serving sentences of over 10 years have a parole hearing after serving a portion of their sentence.

We also raised the age when juveniles are automatically transferred to adult court from age 14 to age 15. It also excludes certain B felony offenses from automatic transfer to adult court and requires a hearing first, as is required for less serious felonies under current law. We also limited the circumstances under which juveniles must be shackled in the courtroom.

Law Enforcement and Minority Communities

This year, we took a look at the critical issue of restoring trust between law enforcement and minority communities. The following are some of the most key provisions of the new law: Police will now receive training in 1) the proper use of physical force; 2) using and retaining the records of body-worn recording equipment (body cameras); and 3) cultural competency, sensitivity, and bias-free policing. By January 1, 2016, law enforcement units will be required to implement guidelines to recruit, retain, and promote more minority police officers. Other key components of the bill include assigning an independent prosecutor to investigate allegations that an officer’s physical force resulted in the death of a person; requiring law enforcement units to document incidents in which a police officer discharges a firearm or uses physical force that likely caused serious physical injury or death; and providing more grant money for municipal police departments to purchase body cameras. Finally, we have strengthened protections for onlookers recording an officer performing his or her duties.