

# STATE REPRESENTATIVE ROBERTA WILLIS

Capitol News 2006

## Strengthening Connecticut's Economy

Our goal was to help foster a healthy business climate and stimulate job growth. The state legislature took some positive steps in strengthening our Connecticut economy. Our package of tax credits, tax cuts, entrepreneurial business grants and skilled job training sends a strong message about our commitment to growing the state's economy.

The most potentially productive policy we enacted was the **phase-out of the tax on manufacturing equipment**. In a state that has been losing jobs in the manufacturing sector, taxing factory machinery is counterproductive. It discourages investment in equipment at a time when we are trying to foster investment in high tech manufacturing to create good paying jobs. Elimination of the tax should encourage our existing companies to expand and help attract companies to locate here. This change will spur economic development in the City of Torrington by fostering its manufacturing base.

Other positive actions are the **elimination of the corporate tax surcharge** for 2007 and the creation of **targeted tax credits for the film and entertainment industry** designed to entice business into the state. Litchfield County is well positioned for developing the *creative economy* and could truly benefit from this legislation designed to make Connecticut a major player in attracting movie and television production in the future.

## A Fair and Balanced Budget

The budget we passed was done on time, under the spending cap and is an investment in Connecticut's future. We provided more municipal aid for schools, roads, and increased funding for special education. We also invested in the future by fully funding the state teacher's pension fund, paying down long term debt and shoring up the Rainy Day Fund, all of which provide big savings for taxpayers in the long term.

It was a good news session on the tax front - **no new taxes and tax cuts for residents and businesses**. We were able to provide real tax relief for residents by **increasing the property tax credit to \$500**.

All in all, we made great strides this session, but there is still more that needs to be done...



## 64<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

Cornwall  
Goshen  
Salisbury  
Sharon  
Torrington



64th District

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE



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## Enjoy the Great Outdoors this Summer

Encouraging children to spend time outdoors and have them connect to nature offers numerous benefits. "No Child Left Inside" is a special initiative by the Department of Environmental Protection that promotes the vast natural resources, historical significance and recreational opportunities of Connecticut's 137 State Parks and Forests.



With more than 800 miles of hiking trails, 2,000 miles of rivers and streams, 1,300 campsites in 14 parks, 9 historic sites and 237 lakes and ponds, Connecticut is home to some amazing natural resources and recreational activities. There's nothing like a day of fresh air and adventure to bring the family together, and whether you like to hike, fish, climb, ski or swim, you'll find a Connecticut State Park or Forest that's just right for you. For more information about this valuable program please visit [www.nochildleftinside.org](http://www.nochildleftinside.org)

Here is a sampling of parks in our area for you to explore and enjoy:

- Beckley Furnace State Park, North Canaan
- Burr Pond State Park, Torrington
- Housatonic Meadows State Park, Sharon
- Kent Falls State Park, Kent
- Mohawk State Forest, Cornwall/Goshen
- Stillwater Pond State Park, Torrington



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# Making Connecticut a Healthier and Better Place to Live

## Healthy Food and Drinks in Schools

*With an increasing number of overweight children, providing nutritious choices to our students is essential to providing them with healthy futures.*

We needed to send the right message to our kids, so this session we passed the **Healthy Schools Initiative** to reinforce healthy eating habits at schools. The toughest law in the nation, it bans the sale of soda and sugary beverages and offers incentives for schools to provide healthy food and snacks for purchase by students. This law also restricts the types of beverages sold in school at school stores, vending machines, cafeterias and fundraising activities on school grounds. It requires the Department of Education to establish nutritional standards for food sold to students in school while providing a financial incentive to public schools that choose healthy foods and snacks. For each lunch served that meets these standards, the school will receive a 10-cent bonus in the state match to the National School Lunch Program. Connecticut's law has become a national model for addressing this problem.

## Helping Families Save for College

*The best way for families to ensure that they can afford to send their children to college is to start saving early.*

Taxpayers will now be able to deduct their contributions to the **Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET)** from their Connecticut adjusted gross income for state income tax purposes. Single filers can deduct up to \$5,000 whereas joint filers can deduct \$10,000. Any unused deductions can be carried forward for the following five years so long as each deduction does not exceed the annual maximums. This can be a very effective incentive for families to save for college.

## Good News For Elderly Nutrition Programs

*Elderly Nutrition Programs enable many area seniors to remain in their own homes, which is of great benefit to themselves and their families.*

Recent federal cuts left these programs facing serious cutbacks in services. The **Meals on Wheels** program is a vital service bringing needed meals to homebound seniors. A cut in funds would have meant a reduction in the number of deliveries. Our elderly lunch site programs that serve about 20 people per day, like those at the **Lakeville Grove**, would have had to close one or more days per week, cut their meal services or charge seniors more per meal. I worked with the **Litchfield Hills Elderly Nutrition Program** at the **Sullivan Senior Center** to secure an additional \$800,000 in the state budget, which will prevent major cuts and helped to avert this potential crisis.

## Clean Cars, Cleaner Air

*Emissions from motor vehicles are the leading source of global warming pollution in Connecticut.*

As a part of our continuing commitment to improving our air quality, we began a comprehensive effort to encourage consumers to purchase cars that have lower emissions. In an effort to curb the harmful rise of noxious greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated from motor vehicles, we enacted legislation that implements a GHG labeling program for new vehicles sold or leased for the 2009 model year and later. This legislation also provides purchasers of "hybrid passenger cars" with a sales tax exemption on new vehicles purchased between October 1, 2004 and October 1, 2008. This measure is a major step toward the state's goals of lowering greenhouse gas emissions, thus allowing Connecticut residents to breathe easier.

## Disabled Veterans' Property Tax Exemption

*Fairness in property tax relief.*

We passed legislation that excludes veterans' disability payments when determining income for purposes of income-based property tax relief. State mandated exemptions are granted through two statutes; one requires towns to give all qualified applicants a basic \$1,000 property tax exemption, and the other requires towns to give veterans who get the basic exemption an additional exemption, the amount of which depends on their income. This legislation excludes the disability payments as a source of income when determining these exemptions. Disabled veterans deserve our appreciation and a fair shake in determining their property taxes.

## Early Detection of Cancer Saves Lives

*One in eight women will develop breast cancer during her lifetime.*

The **Connecticut Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (CBCCEDP)** currently serves just one-tenth of women deemed eligible for program services. Existing CBCCEDP providers are not able to meet the needs of women currently seeking services, much less the significant number of women considered hard-to-reach. Most of the current providers expend their annual budget for screening and diagnostic services in the first 6 to 9 months of the year. Additional funds would enable these programs to serve all the women in need of services. To that end, we worked hard to ensure that more funds were allocated to cover the cost of this program. I am pleased that I spearheaded this effort to **increase the funding of the early detection program for breast and cervical cancer screening**. This increase will mean more services for more underserved women, and more lives saved.



at your service

Questions ~ Concerns? Call State Representative Roberta Willis at 1-800-842-8267.