

## New Teen Driver Laws

Too often in recent months, tragic teen driving accidents have dominated the headlines. In an effort to prevent future accidents and to encourage responsible driving, numerous changes have been made affecting new teen drivers. Effective August 1, 2008 the changes will be to:



- Extend passenger restrictions for new drivers from six months to one year;
- Establish a curfew of 11 PM for teen drivers; and,
- Require that seat belts be worn by all passengers in a car operated by a teen driver.

In addition, teen drivers will be required to have 40 hours of behind-the-wheel training instead of 20 hours and parents must also attend a two-hour class with their child.

Finally, this new legislation enables police officers to confiscate a teen's drivers license for 48 hours for a violation of any of the graduated license restrictions, excessive speeding, reckless driving and/or street racing.

### A Choice for You...



On November 4, 2008 (Election Day) the following question will be on the ballot regarding a constitutional amendment:

*“Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to permit any person who will have attained the age of eighteen years on or before the day of a regular election to vote in the primary for such regular election?”*

### Sales Tax Holiday on Clothing!!!

This year's sales tax-free week will run from **Sunday, August 17<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>**. It applies to clothing and footwear under \$300.



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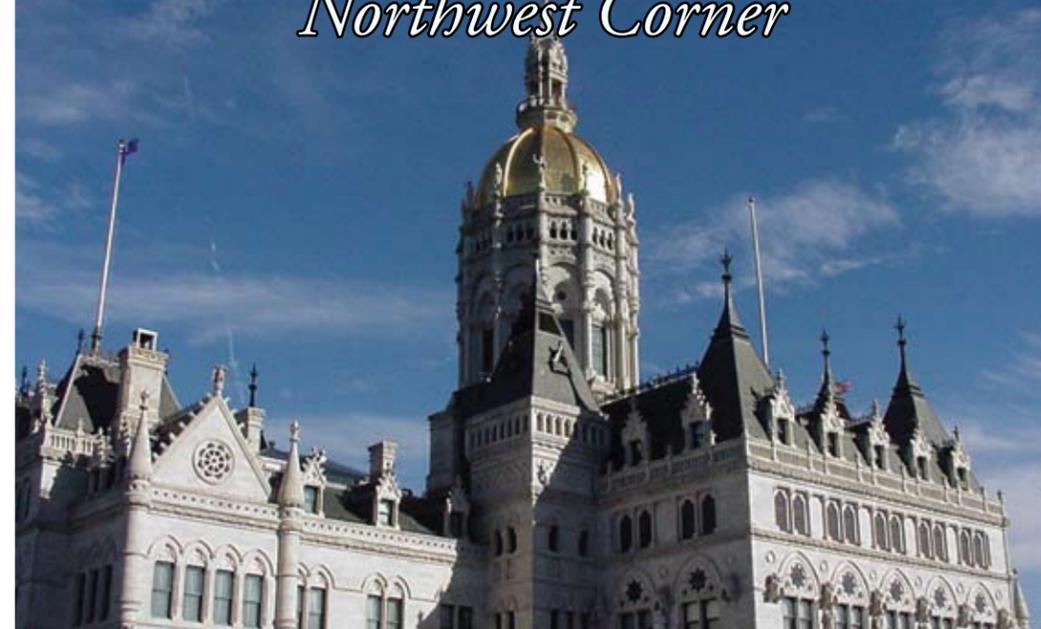
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State Representative

**Roberta  
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*Working Hard for the  
Northwest Corner*



# CAPITOL UPDATE 2008

## A Time for Fiscal Responsibility

Just as Connecticut families are tightening their budgets during this economic downturn, the state has had to take a similar approach by sticking to the 2008-2009 budget passed by Democrats and Republicans last year and signed into law by Governor Rell. Even in a year of declining revenues, we were still able to hold onto our historic investments in health care and additional funding for our towns. Aid to our towns increased by \$131.5 million for the fiscal year 2007-2008, and Medicaid rates were increased to expand access to health care. In all, the budget was able to protect needed increases in aid and preserve our "rainy day fund" without having to increase taxes.

## Crime and Punishment Making our Communities Safer

In response to two horrific home invasion tragedies in Connecticut, the legislature realized that urgent reforms were needed in our criminal justice system concerning sentencing, investigation and prosecution of crimes, and the parole system. Some of the changes made include:

- A new crime of "home invasion" for burglaries in a home while the people are present, with an increased penalty of 10 to 25 years.
- Increased penalties for repeat dangerous felony offenders from twice the minimum penalty for a 2nd offense, to 3 times for the 3rd offense, with a maximum sentence of life.
- Increased amount of time to be served for other burglary convictions.
- The transformation of the Board of Pardons and Parole into a permanent body, equipped with the expertise necessary to better perform its job.

While life has no guarantees, hopefully these new laws will help prevent future tragedies.

## Protecting our Landscape

Protecting our landscape and heritage continues to be one of my priorities. I sponsored a bill which creates a new program to help preserve small community farms not presently eligible for the state development rights purchase program. As shipping costs increase, we need to protect our locally grown food supply.



In March, a Connecticut court ruled that a land trust was liable for property taxes on land it preserved. This decision had far reaching implications and was potentially devastating to Connecticut land trusts. Immediate action was needed, so I initiated an amendment to overturn the court's decision and to ensure that land trusts will not lose their property tax exemption.

## Global Meltdown



Global warming is now considered one of our greatest environmental threats. Connecticut was one of the first states in the nation to adopt mandatory limits on greenhouse gas emissions. This landmark legislation sets goals to reduce Connecticut's emissions to below 1990 levels by 2020. This bill requires low carbon fuel standards and a revision of the state building code to reflect stronger energy standards. In the absence of meaningful federal action, states need to take the initiative. No state is too small to have an impact on climate change.

## Hospice Care

Effective January 1, 2009, the legislature passed a new law which will require the state Medicaid plan to now cover hospice services. People in their final days of life can now choose a hospice program with their family to direct and manage their care – whether they are receiving Medicaid or not. Hospice care can be offered in their home or in nursing homes.

## An Alternative to Nursing Homes

This year the legislature expanded the state's home care program, "**Money Follows the Person.**" This program allows the use of Medicaid funds to provide care for people in their own homes as an alternative to living in nursing homes. Living in one's home is not only desirable for many, but it can be less expensive than a nursing home. The number of individuals who can be served under this program has been expanded from 700 to 5,000. For more information, please call the Department of Social Services at (860) 424-5396.

## Assisting Those with Autism



It is estimated that 1 in 150 children are diagnosed with autism each year. In Connecticut, there are approximately 13,280 to 16,530 adults and children living with autism. Early intervention greatly improves an autistic child's ability to participate in everyday activities. Currently there are few insurance companies covering such therapies. In 2009, companies will be required to cover speech, physical and occupational therapies. To best serve students with autism, the state is developing a comprehensive plan for new teaching methods for teachers and paraprofessionals. Until recently, Connecticut did not provide services to adults with autism spectrum disorders who did not have mental retardation. In 2006, we established a pilot program to provide these services. This year, we expanded the program so more people can participate.

at your service

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