

# Capitol News Briefs



## Storm Response and Power Outages

In the aftermath of the October Nor'easter and Tropical Storm Irene that left much of the state without power, we passed reforms to better prepare for future severe storms and avoid lengthy loss of utility service. Under the new law:

- Utilities will be held to performance standards for emergency preparation and response, similar to the regulations in our bordering states of Massachusetts and New York. Noncompliance could result in penalties.
- Penalties would be assessed as a credit on customer bills, and would not be recoverable by the utilities through increased rates.
- Plans will be required for better communications.
- Regulators will now set minimum staffing levels when disasters occur.
- Procedures will be established for expediting road clearing.
- The state and utilities will work to extend underground power lines.

## Sunday Sales

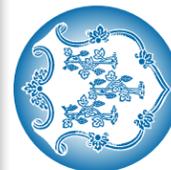
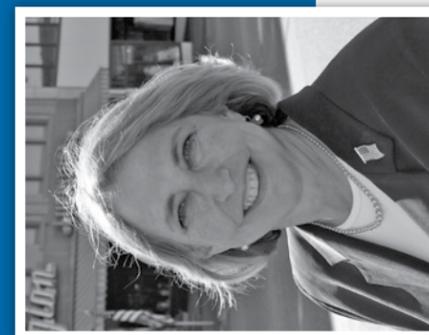
Connecticut eliminated one of the last vestiges of the state's Blue Laws, allowing package and grocery stores to sell alcohol on Sundays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Package and grocery stores are now allowed to open on Memorial, Independence and Labor Days, and on Mondays following any Independence, Christmas or New Year's Days that fall on a Sunday.

## Hospice Care

With just two licensed hospices in the state, this new law will permit hospices to follow federal standards, giving smaller hospice facilities the opportunity to provide high quality services that allow patients to stay closer to family and friends. This bill will help our state to ensure that residents have access to health care services across the full continuum of care.

## Voting Rights

Participation in elections is essential to a healthy democracy. In an effort to increase voter turnout and make registering to vote easier, we need to modernize and revitalize our elections system. A new reform offers two major additions to the existing voting laws – Election Day Registration (effective July 1, 2013) and Online Voter Registration (effective January 1, 2014).



State Representative

**Roberta B. Willis**

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# CAPITOL UPDATE 2012

State Representative  
**Roberta B. Willis**

Legislative Office Building, Room 1802  
Hartford, CT 06106-1591  
Capitol: 800-842-8267  
In District: 860-435-0621  
roberta.willis@cga.ct.gov



Recycle!

# State Representative Roberta B. Willis



## Higher Education

### Preparing for the Jobs of Today and Tomorrow

Even with high employment rates, there are high tech manufacturers that are hiring, but are unable to find the skilled workers for those jobs. In response to that demand, and to assist those who are looking for a career or upgrading their skills, we created three new community college manufacturing centers – in addition to the existing center at Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield. They are currently enrolling students for the fall semester for an Advanced Manufacturing Certificate to be completed in May 2013.

- One of the new manufacturing programs is located at Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury. Students who enroll in these programs may be eligible for financial aid. These certificates are Workforce Investment Act approved, and qualify for assistance under the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program. For more information about the program visit: [www.ctregents.org/manufacturing](http://www.ctregents.org/manufacturing).

### Next Generation Careers

It would be helpful for prospective students and their parents to know what degrees will lead to securing a good job after graduation. This is a justified concern given the high cost of attending college. Under this initiative the Department of Labor will share employment and wage data with state colleges for the purpose of evaluating their degree programs to correspond with current careers.

### Making it Easy to Transfer College Credits

Increasingly, more students are transferring between our community colleges and the state universities. Many students enroll in community colleges so that they can save money, yet they may end up paying more than they should if they cannot transfer credits from one institution to another. To help students with such transfers, Connecticut state universities and the regional community-technical colleges will now offer a general education core of college courses that can be readily transferred among the various schools within these state systems of higher education.

## Job Growth

### Building our Economy

Small businesses create the majority of new jobs in our economy. That's why we've created a new Small Business Express Program and other initiatives that direct \$190 million to support small business growth.

- New job creation incentives.
- Increasing financial assistance for small businesses through loans and matching grants.
- Training assistance to provide subsidies to eligible small businesses and small manufacturers.

Getting people back to work is crucial to our economic recovery. We created the Job Expansion Tax Credit program.

- Businesses can be eligible for tax credits of \$500 per month for each new full time job created.
- If the new employee is unemployed, or is a returning veteran then the tax credit is increased to \$900 per month.
- These credits will be available for each new employee hired between January 1, 2012 and January 1, 2014 for a period of three years.

Making it easier to do business in Connecticut must be a top priority, as it can directly impact companies' bottom lines, so we:

- Shortened time frames for obtaining necessary permits.
- Eliminated burdensome regulations.
- Created new e-business portals to make it easier for companies to access programs and services.

Innovation is the key to future economic growth. This legislation includes critical new investments to support innovation and entrepreneurship in Connecticut.

- \$25 million for startup company loans, investments and matching grants.
- Increased the number of "angel" investors in high-tech and emerging technology startups.



The newly created Bioscience Connecticut Initiative will support the development of a bioscience industry in Connecticut. Anchored by new research labs at the UConn Health Center, this industry will attract hundreds of new jobs.



## Education

### Investing for a Brighter Future

The better we prepare children for the 21st Century workforce, the stronger we will make Connecticut's economy over the long term. Our education reform initiative will provide new support to help turn around underperforming schools. It has long-term implications for our children and for the state's economic well-being. The bill:

- Recognizes the importance of early childhood education by underwriting an additional 1,000 school readiness slots for preschoolers and funding initiatives to improve early reading success.
- Provides health and social supports for disadvantaged students.
- Creates the Commissioner's Network, to provide the intensive supports and interventions needed to turn around 25 of the most chronically low-performing schools which may include additional classroom hours, summer sessions and professional development.
- Support teachers and administrators with performance evaluations; strengthening professional development resources. This will give teachers the support and training they need to be successful in their profession.

*Congratulations to Region 6 School District which includes WAMOGO High School and Goshen Center School for being chosen as 1 of the 10 pilot programs for the new evaluation system during the course of the 2012-2013 school year.*

- Offers more school choice by increasing funding for charter, magnet, and vocational technical and agricultural science schools.
- Provides for fair teacher evaluation and dismissal process. And it respects teachers' bargaining rights.
- Promotes access to innovative programs with proven track records.