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## 2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

Dear Neighbors,

I want to thank you for your support and for allowing me the privilege of representing you in the Connecticut General Assembly.

We still face challenges as Connecticut turns the corner to economic recovery. I am committed to working together for a leaner, more efficient government while ensuring that we maintain essential services.

We are all aware that in spite of a slow but steady recovery over past few years, these are difficult financial times. The state is facing a complicated budget situation and many tough decisions must be made about spending and revenue. It is times like these that remind us of the things that government pays for and the impact that government programs have on our lives. I am committed to ensuring that we find responsible solutions that allow us to address the fiscal situation without making drastic cuts that would hurt our residents, and in the long run harm our state's economy.

As always, keep in touch.

Best regards,

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Roberta B. Willis

PROUDLY SERVING CANAAN, CORNWALL, GOSHEN, KENT, NORFOLK,  
NORTH CANAAN, SALISBURY, SHARON AND TORRINGTON  
64TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Roberta B. Willis

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING

HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591

CAPITOL: 800-842-8267

ROBERTA.WILLIS@CGA.CT.GOV

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/REPROBERTAWILLIS](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/REPROBERTAWILLIS)



## *Legislative News Brief*





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## Supporting the Family Caregivers Who Help Connecticut Seniors

The CARE Act features three main tenets, aimed at recognizing caregivers for the unsung heroes they are, and granting them the tools and resources needed so they can continue to care for their loved ones. The CARE Act would:

- Allow patients to designate the name of a family caregiver in their record upon admission into the hospital;
- Provide adequate notification to family caregivers before their loved one is discharged;
- And give family caregivers the opportunity to receive plain language instruction in the after-care tasks included in their loved ones discharge plan.



## Reducing Electric Rates

This session we took an historic step in protecting Connecticut residents, particularly the elderly, from electricity providers who offered a very low introductory rate that increased rapidly within a few months. This law protects residential ratepayers from predatory variable rate contracts charged by electric suppliers. This measure makes our state the first in the nation to enact these protections. Variable rate suppliers must now give their customers a 60 day notice of the end of their contracts. Suppliers cannot charge these customers a termination fee and must allow customers who want to switch to standard service the ability to do that within 72 hours. Effective Oct 1, 2015



## Phasing Out Single-Use Grocery Bags

I am disappointed to report that our efforts to phase-out single-use paper and plastic bags were not successful this session. The use of these bags is an unnecessary burden on our environment and reusable bags are a simple, common sense solution. I will work to re-introduce this legislation next session.

The average plastic bag is only used for less than an hour, but the damage it does to the environment can last for 1,000 years. Plastic bags are non-biodegradable, persist in our environment, litter open spaces, clog storm drains, cause flooding, pollute waterways, and threaten wildlife. The change would encourage the use of reusable bags in retail stores and phase out the use of single use plastic and paper bags.

## Bringing our Internet Up to Speed

Access to high speed internet has become an absolute necessity for commerce and communication. As technology continues to develop, we are becoming increasingly dependent on an Internet connection to conduct business, communicate, and enjoy entertainment. But our Internet connectivity is lagging. We are working to expand Connecticut's broadband Internet access to all residents, at speeds of up to one gigabit. This will improve access and connection speeds in our region, where Internet connectivity and high speeds are crucial to both our personal and professional lives.

## Protecting Students Protecting Our Economy



Student loan debt is on the rise. This isn't simply a college or student issue, it is an economic issue that affects everyone. The burden of student loan debt looms large in people's lives for years, potentially delaying the purchase of homes and hampering individual's ability to get ahead economically. Student loans are a serious commitment, and borrowers have a right to be fully educated and understand the specific terms of the loans they are signing for. That's why we are working on legislation to create a Student Loan Bill of Rights, and to appoint a student loan ombudsman who can potentially help graduates when confronting the challenges of paying back a loan.