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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
JOSH ELLIOTT
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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Josh Elliott

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As the 2019 legislative session begins, I want to provide you with an update on some of the issues and priorities my colleagues and I plan to address in the Connecticut General Assembly. In odd numbered years, the General Assembly convenes in January, adjourns in June, and is referred to as the “long session.” During this session, proposed bills from individual legislators aren’t limited to matters concerning the state budget (anything tax or spending related). We can introduce any non-budgetary legislation we want. Of course, we will also begin work on a new two-year state budget.

Issues I plan to address, based on input from constituents, include: raising the minimum wage, enacting paid family and medical leave, authorizing electronic highway tolls, approving sports betting and legalizing and regulating the recreational use of cannabis.

The majority of working families support these priorities as new revenue streams to address structural deficits that won’t involve cutting programs or raising taxes. In addition to these issues, I also want to highlight some longer-term initiatives I want to start work on this session and down the road.

For a representative democracy to truly work, I need to hear from you, my constituents. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any ideas, questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Josh Elliott

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State Representative Josh Elliott

Creation of a State Bank

A state bank would be a public institution, chartered by state government, which could perform the same functions as private banks. State government-backed banking institutions could offer lines of credit and loans on terms that are less stringent than what is offered at private banks, making obtainment of student, business and home loans easier. Currently, North Dakota has the only state bank and it has been widely successful and beneficial for North Dakota residents. It is the model for development of other state banks. The short-term plan will be the creation of an infrastructure bank, which would allow municipalities to obtain loans inexpensively, and once we see success, we would begin to look at other avenues of helping the public.

Ranked Choice Voting

A ranked-choice voting system is one in which voters rank candidates by preference on their ballot. The advantage of this system is that voters can vote for the candidate they like the most, rather than being forced to vote for a candidate they don't like as much but who has a better chance of winning. Numerous studies show that ranked choice voting results in greater voter satisfaction, which in turn increases voter participation. Another benefit of using ranked choice voting is that it eliminates the need for expensive runoff elections. Furthermore, a study by the League of Women Voters shows that with the new system, candidates are less likely to use attack ads and engage in negative campaigning. Additionally, research indicates that more diverse candidates would run because of an increased chance of winning and that minority voting rights would be strengthened.

Expanding the Right to Vote

The absentee ballot, as it exists, allows people who are sick, physically unable or out of town on Election Day to vote via mail-in ballot. A "No Excuse" absentee ballot would allow anyone to vote using a mail-in ballot. This would allow anyone who can't physically vote at a specified voting place during the hours of the election to be able to vote via mail.

Recently, there has been a general push in state legislatures around the country to reinstate the voting rights of incarcerated people and ex-offenders who are ineligible to vote in state or national elections. Varying from state to state, the voting rights of ex-offenders can be stripped away permanently or can be reinstated upon completion of their sentencing. In fourteen states and the District of Columbia, felons lose their voting rights only while incarcerated and receive automatic restoration upon release. For these individuals who have paid for their consequences, as a baseline they should retain the right to vote and have a say in the government and the laws of the society they live in.

Ultimately, we should follow the model of Maine and Vermont, and allow all people to vote, regardless of incarceration status.



Creation of a Public Option

Statistics show 194,000 or 5.5% of Connecticut residents do not have health insurance, and 50% of all declared bankruptcies in the United States stem from a health crisis. A public option would make healthcare more affordable for uninsured citizens who are either unable to afford high rates or are rejected by private health insurers. The creation of a new public option would help fill gaps where insurance options are limited, offering consumers choice and competitive pricing. The purpose is to ensure that all Americans in the individual market have access to an affordable healthcare plan, even if private insurers raise rates or exit the market. A public option would still allow citizens to have private health insurance if they wanted to, but would give those who are unable to get private health insurance a way to insure themselves.

Universal Broadband

The Internet is a central part of everyday life and work in the modern day, and all citizens should have a baseline access that is fast and affordable. Implementing universal broadband would ensure that people are able to work and communicate through technology at an adequate level. Cities that have developed their own municipal broadband have seen significant increases in Internet usage and educational development. The long-term benefits of instituting universal broadband systems significantly outweigh the short-term costs. Investing in universal broadband would increase internet speeds and capabilities while decreasing internet access cost, facilitate a long-term improvement in education and a rise in tech entrepreneurship, and increase economic output.