

ENSURING ACCESS TO LEGAL SERVICES

Everyone must be treated fairly under the law and ensuring reliable access to legal services is a keystone to that fundamental right. That's why the legislature ensured funding for legal services for the poor. Access to reliable counsel for criminal defendants has not been a problem, but the same has not been true in civil court. A newly established task force will examine this issue and report its finding to the General Assembly later this year.

BAN THE BOX

An Act Concerning Fair Chance Employment was created to prevent employers from requiring people to disclose a criminal record when first applying for a job. On job applications, people are frequently asked to "check the box" for any arrests or convictions. Under this legislation, the box would be banned and employers would be prohibited from inquiring about a criminal record during the initial application process (but would still have the ability to inquire about criminal history during the interview process). Some employers, such as law enforcement and school districts, which are required to verify an applicant's criminal history, would be exempt.

BED BUGS – RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

Bed bug infestation is a real problem in the state of Connecticut. In rental units, the resolution of bed bug infestation necessitates the cooperation of both tenants and landlords. This bill provides a framework for that cooperation. Specifically, this bill:

- Requires that landlords hire a third-party inspector or inspect a unit themselves if a tenant reports that they know or suspect that their unit is infested;
- Requires that landlords hire and pay a pest control agent to treat the problem if they are unable to resolve it themselves;
- Requires that if a landlord treats the infestation him or herself, a third-party inspector must confirm the treatment's success;
- Makes tenants financially responsible for subsequent treatment costs for their unit if they knowingly and unreasonably fail to comply with treatment measures;
- Prohibits landlords from renting units that they know or suspect are infested with bed bugs;
- Requires that the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station develop and publish guidelines and best practices in treating bed bug infestations;
- Allows both tenants and landlords avenues for grievance and enforcement if either fails to comply with these practices.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

TONI E. WALKER

PROUDLY SERVING NEW HAVEN



Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Capitol: 800-842-8267
Toni.Walker@cga.ct.gov
www.housedems.ct.gov/walker

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
Permit No. 3937

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

TONI E. WALKER

PROUDLY SERVING NEW HAVEN

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

House Democrats led the way in passing significant legislation during the 2016 session of the General Assembly to help protect and improve the quality of life for Connecticut families.

This was a session dominated by the budget. Although there were no easy solutions, we approved a budget that is balanced, without tax or fee increases, without borrowing, and without dipping into the Rainy Day Fund – that cuts \$861 million.

Improving the juvenile justice system, increasing housing rights, and encouraging continuing education were featured elements of some of the major bills approved by the legislature this year.

Keeping Connecticut a great place to live, work, and raise a family is our ongoing responsibility. Though the 2016 legislative session presented one of the toughest budget challenges in decades, we succeeded to help move our state forward.

I thank you for the continued support in allowing me to serve you and your loved ones in the Elm City. It is my pleasure and together we can create a bright future for ourselves and our families.

Sincerely,



HIGHER EDUCATION CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Sub-baccalaureate/certificate programming is an instrumental part of achieving the state's goal regarding higher education attainment and its workforce needs. The programming provides students the ability to receive industry-recognized credentials and a path towards employment.

In recognition of the importance of the success of certificate programming in achieving Connecticut's goal of 70% of Connecticut's workforce having some level of post-secondary education by the year 2020, the legislature passed a bill to provide greater oversight of sub-baccalaureate and certificate programs at institutions of higher education.

TAX RELIEF

The city is receiving an increase in municipal aid – \$7.9 million over what we received in FY 2016.

The mill rate on vehicles has been lowered to 37, from the current rate of 41.55 – This means lower car tax bills for all vehicle owners in New Haven.

\$14.5 MILLION FOR Q HOUSE PROJECT

The plan to tear down and rebuild Q House received \$14.5 million in state bond funds. Q House is an important community institution. There has been a hole in the Dixwell neighborhood since Q House closed more than 10 years ago. This injection of state funds will allow the re-birth of Q House to move forward. We are excited to see the construction of the new Q House be completed in the fall of 2017.

RECRUITING MINORITY TEACHERS

As in most states across the country, teachers of color are underrepresented in Connecticut schools. To recruit more minority teachers, we passed legislation that will improve the size and scope of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force and encourage minority students to pursue a college degree in education by establishing a pilot program in certain towns. The program will allow minority students to earn college credits while in high school and take an introductory course in education.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

TONI E. WALKER

PROUDLY SERVING NEW HAVEN

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The legislature remains committed to reducing the number of youth in the adult criminal justice system while promoting policies that effectively and fairly address issues within the juvenile justice system.

This comprehensive new law:

- Clarifies jurisdiction in juvenile matters.
- Limits the courts' considerations for detaining minors while adding a new risk-assessment tool.
- Allows courts to consider alternatives to detention.
- Provides a new measure that will shift the courts' focus from punishment and truancy to individual supervision, care, accountability and treatment in juvenile matters while remaining consistent with public safety concerns.
- Clarifies the expulsion process by improving notification to parents, and permitting lawyers and advocates to attend expulsion hearings – also clarifies that expulsions related to weapons are to be reported to police while expulsions related to drugs are to be referred to local agencies that address intervention, rehabilitation and support.
- Ensures the state institutional schools will no longer be able to issue out-of-school suspensions.
- Limits detention periods to seven days at a time.
- Updates the Judicial Department's detention procedures in addition to their rehabilitation and support services.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING LAWS

Women in abusive relationships are 5 times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to a firearm. Connecticut is taking great strides in protecting women and children from domestic violence by requiring a person to surrender firearms after being served with a temporary restraining order. Another new law was created to help prevent sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Reasons for legislation:

- The days following service of a temporary restraining order and the days leading up to the first court appearance are the most dangerous for a victim of domestic violence.
- Nationally, domestic assaults involving firearms are 12 times more likely to result in fatal violence than those involving other weapons or bodily harm.
- Connecticut averaged 14 intimate partner homicides per year from 2000 to 2012 and firearms were used in 39 percent of those 188 homicides, making them the most commonly used weapon to commit intimate partner homicide in Connecticut.

Connecticut is not alone in enacting this type of legislation. At least twenty other states, including Massachusetts and Texas – the bastion of gun rights – have passed similar laws authorizing or requiring the surrender of firearms at the ex parte stage.

Sexual exploitation and human trafficking:

This legislation strengthens laws against trafficking of human and sexual exploitation. It adds membership to the Trafficking in Persons Council and strengthens its charges.

- Shifts some criminal responsibility away from minors charged with prostitution and onto those who solicit prostitution from minors.
- Expands scope, enforcement and notice of state trafficking laws.
- Makes it easier for rape victims to terminate the parental rights of assailants.