

## Education Reform

Considering the state's future workers, it is sobering to realize that 40% are not meeting educational standards for global competition. We need every child to succeed!

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

- Recognizes the critical importance of early childhood education by underwriting 1,000 school readiness slots for preschoolers and funding initiatives to improve early reading success.
- Creates the Commissioner's Network, to provide the intensive supports and interventions needed to turn around 25 of the most chronically low-performing schools.
- Gives the state commissioner of education the needed authority to develop or modify plans with teachers and parents at "turnaround" schools.



## Saving Energy

Wallingford is home to businesses with cutting-edge technology to improve efficiency and reduce our dependence on unstable sources of foreign oil. Yet for residents of our older homes, as well as institutions and businesses, the price of heating and cooling remains unaffordable due to inefficient use of energy. In the June Special Session, we reinstated the energy audit program which was in danger of cancellation.

www.housedems.ct.gov/Mushinsky

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State Representative

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Serving Wallingford | 85<sup>th</sup> District

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From jobs to education, the legislature took on historic challenges to help citizens in many ways in 2012. It started last October when we passed comprehensive, bipartisan jobs legislation that invested hundreds of millions of dollars in small businesses, gave firms hiring incentives, aligned education programs with jobs-in-demand, encouraged entrepreneurship and innovation, and eliminated red-tape for growing companies.

This spring, we balanced a budget by keeping our funding promise to towns as well as essential services for vulnerable residents without raising taxes. We approved significant investments in early childhood education and interventions to our educational system so our children can succeed in the global marketplace.

We made it easier for people to exercise voting rights and protected victims of domestic violence. Along the way, we gave new hope to those suffering from debilitating illnesses by legalizing medical marijuana only for certain suffering patients. We helped children with special needs by improving Individualized Education Plans and created a study on workforce development, training and employment of young adults with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

In addition, I worked on several bills on behalf of residents facing high fuel bills. Our budget includes \$23,433,838 in state funding for Wallingford, helping stabilize our property taxes.

This is just a brief summary--I'm happy to answer any questions about these issues or any others facing our state or your family. Please feel free to contact me at home 203.269.8378 or office 800.842.8267.

Sincerely,

*Mary Mushinsky*

# CAPITOL REPORT 2012

HOUSE DEMOCRATS of CONNECTICUT



State Representative

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Serving Wallingford | 85<sup>th</sup> District

## DOT To Save State Dollars

This bill provides significant time savings on construction projects. Compared with the more traditional design-bid-build approach where the design and construction services must be undertaken in sequence, this measure promotes “Design-Build” as an alternate method of project delivery. Under this law, first suggested by the Program Review & Investigations Committee that I serve on, the design and construction phases of a project are combined into one contract, allowing for certain aspects of design and construction to run concurrently. Our change should lower costs and shorten the timetable.

## P-Card Savings

Another suggestion by the Program Review and Investigations Committee raised the limit of agency p-card (purchasing card) for larger or bulk purchases to enable the state and participating towns to maximize rebates from purchases made with the p-card. The system is more efficient than the traditional purchase order and check issuance.

## Protecting Children

“Caylee’s Law” sets criminal penalties for the failure to report the disappearance of a child. The law is in response to the circumstances surrounding the death of Florida toddler Caylee Anthony, and applies to any parent, guardian or person who has custody or supervision of the child.



If you need additional assistance or have questions, please contact me:

Capitol Phone: 800.842.8267

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## Veterans

### Desecrating veteran memorials

Honoring the present and past sacrifices of our veterans is one of my highest priorities. We increased penalties for desecrating veteran’s memorials beyond the monetary value of what was vandalized.

### Diversions programs for Vets with PTSD & Legal Issues

So many of our service men and women return home and face a variety of challenges, not the least of which are legal issues and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A federally funded pilot program for veterans dealing with these issues is helpful but limited, so we expanded the program to more locations throughout the state.

### CT Veterans charity network

Fraudulent charity groups often misrepresent veterans, trying to take advantage of our good will toward those who serve our country. We helped protect consumers from these fraudulent groups by creating a legitimate charities list on the Department of Veteran’s Affairs website.

### Unemployed Armed Forces Subsidized Training

At least 8000 veterans will come back to Connecticut in the next year, and they will need to return to jobs. We authorized \$10 million (\$5 million in Fiscal Year 2013 and 2014) to the Labor Department for this program to train returning veterans for new careers.

## Environment

### Phosphorous Reduction

Improves the quality of state waters and allows towns to seek partial reimbursement for phosphorus removal from the state’s Clean Water Fund for planning, design and construction of wastewater collection and treatment projects.

### Sewage Spill Alerts

Recognizes that sewage spills can impact the health and property of residents as well as take an environmental toll on our waterways and beaches. Spill alerts will now occur for breaches at sewage treatment plants, whether caused by storm overflow or operational problems. The new law establishes a process to inform the public whenever a sewage spill occurs by requiring the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to post information on sewage spills on the agency’s website beginning in July 2014.



Rep. Mushinsky test-driving a hydrogen-fueled car



Rep. Mushinsky talking with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner, Daniel Esty

## Reducing Domestic Violence

We have made great progress in helping families affected by domestic violence in recent years, but the problem persists in our communities. Building on earlier successes, this year we strengthened the state’s laws to better protect victims, hold abusers accountable, and give new tools to law enforcement by:

- Improving access to and enforcement of protective and restraining orders.
- Giving police officers new tools, including a model policy for responding to domestic violence incidents.
- Allowing victims to report email and texting violations of restraining and protective orders in the town where they reside, where they receive the communication or where the communication was initiated.
- Extending the maximum length of restraining orders from six months to one year.



## Senior Focus

Protecting the quality of life for our senior citizens is a top priority. This year the legislature focused on healthcare and grandparents’ rights.

**GRANDPARENTS’ RIGHTS** - Family relationships are complicated and grandparents can sometimes be separated from their grandchildren’s lives particularly when divorce or disagreements occur. This new law helps grandparents seeking visitation rights by providing guidance on evidence showing a parent-like relationship exists and that a denial of visitation rights could cause harm to the child. Decisions should be made in a child’s best interests and this legislation helps do that.

**PRESERVING MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY** – This legislation ensured thousands of seniors and people with disabilities could continue to use the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to help pay for their Medicare co-pays and deductibles by raising the income limit for MSP to accommodate a 3.6 percent Social Security cost of living increase (COLA) which took effect January 1. It would have been a tragic irony if a welcome increase in Social Security made some Connecticut residents ineligible for these Medicare benefits.

## Promoting Connecticut-Made Manufacturing

In the revised Fiscal Year 2013 budget, we provided funding to the Department of Economic and Community Development to promote Connecticut-made manufactured products. The program will mirror the “Connecticut Grown” program for agricultural products.

## Small Business Express

In the October 2011 Special Session, we authorized \$100 million to the Small Business Express Program. A business friendly application process is available at the Department of Economic and Community Development website: [www.ct.gov/ecd](http://www.ct.gov/ecd)

