



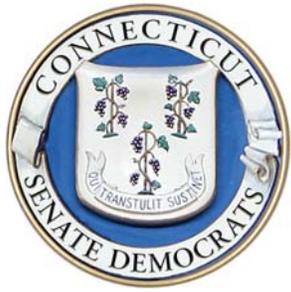
# COOPERATION 2013 SESSION ACCOMPLISHMENT SENATE VISION DEMOCRATS PROGRESS



**Donald Williams**, President Pro Tempore • **Martin Looney**, Majority Leader

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Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

## Responding To Tragedy

### A Bipartisan Response to the Tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary

The tragedy in Newtown demanded a powerful response—one that transcends partisan politics. Democrats and Republicans worked together to pass a comprehensive bipartisan Gun Violence Prevention and Children’s Safety Law designed to reduce gun violence, improve access to mental health services and strengthen school security. The new law is the result of an extensive public input process and lengthy negotiations among legislative leaders of both parties and should serve not only as a model of bipartisanship, but as a model for other states and Congress as they seek to decrease future incidents of gun violence.

*AAC Gun Violence Prevention and Children’s Safety*; SB 1160, PA 13-3

### An Outlet for the Private Sector for Disaster Relief

This bill establishes a new tax-exempt foundation, the Connecticut Coordinated Assistance and Recovery Endowment (CT CARE), to support coordinated emergency recovery in cases where state services are affected by natural disasters, acts of domestic terrorism, catastrophic events and other emergencies. It establishes the Coordinated Emergency Recovery Fund (CERF), under the state treasurer’s auspices, to disburse private funds to CT CARE so it in turn can provide relief and assistance to individuals, towns and nonprofit organizations affected by such emergencies.

*AAC Coordinated Long-Term Disaster Relief and Recovery*; HB 6374, PA 13-275

## Helping Our Seniors

### Helping Seniors Age in Place

Building on the work of the Aging in Place Task Force, we’ve continued our efforts to ensure seniors can stay in their homes and communities. We passed a bill that requires local conservation and development plans to consider ways to allow older adults and disabled individuals to live in their homes and communities whenever possible. The bill also makes individuals who work with seniors mandated elder abuse reporters and requires the Department of Consumer Protection to conduct a public awareness campaign to educate seniors and caregivers on ways to resist aggressive marketing tactics and scams.

*AAC Aging in Place*; SB 886, PA 13-250

### Protecting Seniors From Fear of Retaliation

Nursing home residents are among our state’s most vulnerable. To ensure that they feel safe in their homes, we passed a bill that adds patients’ fear of retaliation to annual in-service training already required of nursing home staff. Training will now include discussion of seniors’ right to file complaints and voice grievances, examples of what might be considered retaliation, and methods of preventing employee retaliation and alleviating seniors’ fear of retaliation. This addition to existing nursing home staff training requirements guarantees seniors a more positive relationship with the caretakers they depend on.

*AAC Training Nursing Home Staff about Residents’ Fear of Retaliation*; SB 519; PA 13-70

### Making State Buildings Accessible to All

Making Connecticut’s state buildings accessible to all ensures that everyone can participate in their government. The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) is currently reviewing state agency compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The bill requires that DAS report to the Aging Committee with the results of their survey of approachability in and to state buildings. This report will be put to use in making recommendations on how to improve the accessibility of state buildings for elderly and disabled individuals.

*AAC A Report on the Survey of Accessibility in and to State Buildings*; SB 521; SA 13-6



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

## Building Livable Communities for Seniors

The General Assembly passed a bill that requires the Commission on Aging to establish a “Livable Communities” initiative to serve as a best practices forum and resource clearinghouse that will help municipal and state leaders design communities that are friendly to seniors. A “livable community” is defined by this bill as a neighborhood with affordable and appropriate housing, infrastructure, community services and transportation options for residents of all ages. By establishing best practices and planning ahead, more of Connecticut’s communities will become senior friendly, making our state an even better place to live out one’s golden years.

*AAC Livable Communities*; HB 6396, PA 13-109

## Protecting Consumers

### Stamping Out Price Gouging

In light of recent severe hurricanes and historic snowstorms, members of the public have been vulnerable to price gouging by those who provide services such as snow removal, flood abatement, roof raking and lodging. This bill expands our consumer protection laws by prohibiting price gouging for services that are essential for the health, safety and welfare of consumers in the aftermath of severe storms. This will be a deterrent to exploitative business owners and will protect consumers from predatory practices.

*AA Prohibiting Price Gouging During Severe Weather Events*; SB 320, PA 13-175

### A National Leader on GMO Food Labeling

There is mounting scientific evidence that genetically modified foods are harmful to our environment, and possibly to human health as well. That’s why this past legislative session the General Assembly passed a new law to help Connecticut families have all the information they need to make informed choices when feeding their families.

The bipartisan law requires food intended for human consumption that is entirely or partially genetically-engineered to bear the words “Produced with Genetic Engineering” on its packaging. The phrase must be printed in the same size and font as the ingredients on the product’s nutrition facts panel. Unpackaged raw agricultural commodities must be labeled on their retail shelf or bin.

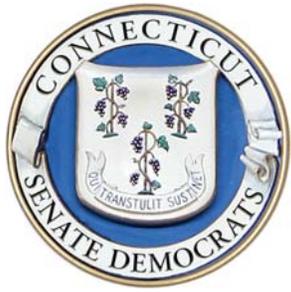
For the legislation to take effect, four states (including one state which borders Connecticut) must pass a similar bill. In addition, any combination of northeastern states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania or New Jersey) with a combined population of at least 20 million people must approve similar legislation. Connecticut has now set the standard for states around the country to follow.

*AAC Genetically-Engineered Food*; HB 6527, PA 13-183

### Banning Indoor Tanning for Minors

Skin cancer has become the most common form of cancer in the United States, and it is estimated that 1,080 Connecticut residents will be diagnosed with melanoma in 2013. Melanoma is now the leading cause of cancer among women aged 20-29 and the leading cause of cancer death among women aged 25-30. Recent studies have identified indoor tanning as highly carcinogenic, and have shown that children and adolescents exposed to these devices experience greatly increased cancer risks in adulthood. To address this issue, we passed a bill that prohibits tanning facility operators from allowing anyone under the age of 17 to use tanning beds. In enacting this ban we hope and anticipate that lives will be saved.

*AAC The Use of Indoor Tanning Devices by Persons Under 17 Years of Age*; SB 872; PA 13-79



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

### **Creating Prize-Linked Savings Accounts**

In order to encourage more people to save money for future family expenses, this legislation permits Connecticut banks to begin offering prize-linked savings accounts to their customers. Anyone who makes a minimum deposit into such an account will be entered into a raffle for a prize offered by the bank. This optional incentive should make saving even more attractive for many people.

*AA Encouraging Increased Savings Deposits*; HB 5564, PA 13-96

### **Helping Homeowners Avoid Foreclosure**

The financial market meltdown that pushed us into recession continues to affect homeowners here in Connecticut, with countless families still facing foreclosure. This year we worked to improve Connecticut's foreclosure mediation process, which brings homeowners and lenders together with an impartial mediator to try and work out a beneficial agreement. Our reforms will ensure all parties in these mediations deal in good faith, and will help them to reach a resolution more swiftly.

*AA Concerning Homeowner Protection Rights*; HB 6355, PA 13-136

### **Preserving Your Rent-Paying Options**

Many people who rent apartments or houses don't have the ability to pay their bills online, or they simply prefer to pay by check or with cash. This bill prohibits landlords from limiting people to paying rent only by electronic transfer; they must accept rent payments in at least one other form, such as a cashier's check or cash.

*AA Prohibiting Residential Landlords from Requiring Tenants to Pay Rent by Electronic Transfer*; SB 114, PA 13-35;

### **Oversight of Veterinarian Prescriptions**

By law, the Connecticut Board of Veterinary Medicine may discipline a veterinarian for a number of causes, including cruelty or negligence toward animals or birds. This bill allows the board to consider the American Veterinary Medical Association's published standards of care and guidelines when determining if a veterinarian acted with negligence, including for the improper use or distribution of prescription drugs.

*AAC The Duties of Veterinarians When Prescribing Prescription Medications*; SB 918, PA 13-230

## **A Focus on Children & Families**

### **Helping Kids Get the Mental Health Treatment They Need**

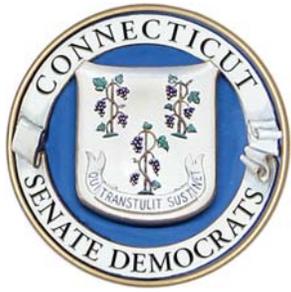
Mental health and physical health go hand in hand, yet mental health issues are often ignored in Connecticut. This is a particularly troubling trend when it comes to children, who can't recognize or deal with these issues on their own. This year we passed a bill to meet the mental, emotional and behavioral needs of children through actions like coordinated home visits, a public information campaign and a Children's Mental Health Task Force.

*AAC The Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health of Youths*; SB 972, PA 13-178

### **Protecting Children From Sexual Abuse**

Erin's Law is named after Erin Merryn, an Illinois woman who was sexually abused as a child by a neighbor and a cousin. Merryn has advocated across America for age-appropriate sexual abuse education for children, and this bill would have created a Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children to develop a plan to reduce child sexual abuse. An estimated 300,000 children are sexually abused each year, and approximately 90 percent of these children know the perpetrators. Unfortunately, this bill only passed the Senate and did not become law.

*AA Establishing a Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children*; SB 158;



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

## Internship Opportunities for Children in State Foster Care

Foster children are less likely to have completed high school and college than their peers, and many of them have trouble finding employment after they age out of the foster care system. By providing more opportunities for these young adults to gain experience in the workplace, we can improve their employment outcomes. That's why we passed a bill requiring state agencies to give preference to current and former foster children up to age 25 when filling internship positions.

*AAC Foster Children and Internship Opportunities*; SB 27, PA -13-124

## Protecting Employees Who Report Suspected Child Abuse

The bill prohibits an employer from preventing an employee who is a so-called "mandated reporter" under state law from reporting a suspected incident of child abuse or testifying in a child-abuse proceeding. The bill also amends the state whistle-blower law to prohibit an employer from penalizing an employee who is a mandated reporter for reporting suspected child abuse.

*AAC Responsibilities of Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect*; SB 821; PA 13-53

## An Alternative to Animal Dissection

Once a rite of passage, animal dissection in school could soon be replaced with another, similar educational assignment. That's because we passed a bill that requires schools to excuse a student from dissecting or observing the dissection of an animal if his or her parents want their child excused. The child would have to complete a similar assignment, however.

*AAC Dissection Choice*; HB 6329, PA 13-273

## Using Therapy Dogs for Public Good

Therapy dogs were effectively used in Newtown after the December 14th shootings to help children in the aftermath of that tragedy. This bill requires the state to train certain employees and mental health care providers on animal-assisted therapy, and to also develop a volunteer canine crisis response team who would be ready to respond to the needs of Connecticut's children and families.

*AAC Animal Therapy*; HB 6465, PA 13-114

## ALD Screening for All Newborns

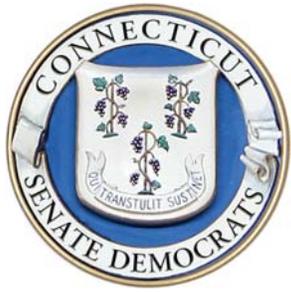
Adrenoleukodystrophy (ALD) is a genetic disorder that can result in severe disability or even death if left untreated. Early detection and treatment can diminish and even cure the disease before the first symptoms appear. Children with ALD are born missing a critical enzyme, and its absence leads to the eventual destruction of myelin in the body. Without myelin, children rapidly lose their sight, speech, ambulation, and the ability to eat most food and liquids by mouth. This bill requires health-care institutions test newborns for ALD unless their parents object on religious grounds. This early screening can help cure countless children who would have otherwise suffered from ALD.

*An Act Requiring Newborn Screening for Adrenoleukodystrophy*; SB 465, PA 13-242

## Keeping Parents Informed of DCF Investigations

Balancing the needs of parents and the best interests of children, we passed a law to ensure parents are aware of investigations into suspected child abuse or neglect. The law requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to notify the child's guardian and parents when opening an investigation, if it is in the child's best interests. DCF could refrain from providing this notice if it has reasonable grounds to believe that doing so would interfere with a criminal investigation or endanger someone.

*AAC Notice of Investigations by the Department of Children and Families*; SB 763, PA 13-77



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

## Boosting Our Economy

### Still Investing in Our Small Businesses

Building on the success of our Small Business Express Program – which helped over 600 firms create or preserve over 7,000 jobs – we’ve increased our investment in this program by redirecting funding to ensure that small businesses can continue to grow and thrive in Connecticut.

*AA Making Manufacturing Assistance Act Funds Available for the Small Business Express Program;* SB 801; PA 13-2

### Connecting State Projects to State Jobs

When the state invests in large economic development projects, the construction firms tasked with the work should hire state residents. This bill would have ensured that Connecticut tax dollars are helping Connecticut residents find employment by requiring any company receiving more than \$5 million in state funds to hire Connecticut residents and report on their progress to the Department of Economic and Community Development. Unfortunately, this bill only passed the Senate and did not become law.

*AA Maximizing Jobs for State Workers by Requiring Local Construction Hiring Reports by Recipients of Economic Development Funds;* SB 1130

### Building More Affordable Housing

This bill increases the total dollar amount of mortgages that the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) can purchase in order to finance affordable housing. The amount of some CHFA mortgages are subject to a cap, and without raising it CHFA will not be able to make any more housing developments or offer mortgages to single-family home buyers. Recent studies indicate there is only one affordable rental unit for every three low-income families in need.

*AA Increasing Access to Affordable Housing;* SB 845, PA 13-65

### Establishing a State Port Authority

Connecticut’s deep-water ports offer a valuable economic development engine for the state economy. Building on the model of the Connecticut Airport Authority, this bill would have established an Authority to govern the state’s three major ports: Bridgeport, New Haven and New London. This new agency would develop and promote these assets in a coordinated and cohesive manner. Connecticut can play an important role in the booming coastal shipping industry, creating jobs and building our local economies.

*An Act Establishing the Connecticut State-Wide Port Authority;* SB 1043



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

# Improving Education

## **New Options for Boards of Education: Community Schools**

A new law adds the Community School model to the options boards of education have to turn around low-performing schools. This strategy has successfully closed the achievement gap and contributed to higher attendance rates, more parent involvement, fewer discipline problems, higher student self-esteem and improved academic achievement. Educators now seek to empower lifelong learners, taking into account not only academics but a child's health and social well-being as well. Community Schools access readily available, local resources and engage students, families, local businesses and nearby service providers.

*AAC Community Schools*; SB 1002; PA 13-64

## **Education Reform Polished So Students Can Shine**

Another new law revises last year's sweeping education reforms. The experience of local school districts helped identify and shape these necessary revisions to teacher evaluation programs as well as reading and literacy initiatives. When it comes to education reform, one size doesn't necessarily fit all. These adjustments will help individual school districts implement the reforms.

*AAC Revisions to the Education Reform Act of 2012*; SB 1097, PA 13-245

## **More Eyes on Pool Safety for Students**

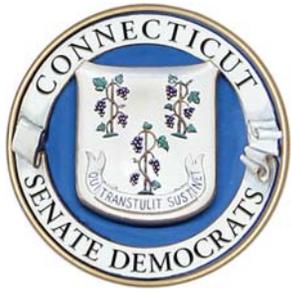
Recent, tragic incidents involving students and swimming pools prompted this effort to standardize pool safety requirements throughout Connecticut's public schools. The bill requires that, in addition to the person conducting student aquatic activities at a school pool, at least one qualified educator, swimming coach or lifeguard must be present to monitor swimmers at public schools. Swimming is said to be the fourth-most popular recreational activity in the nation and is exceptionally good exercise. We want to combine swimming instruction with physical education but must do so with impeccable standards for swimmer safety.

*AAC Pool Safety at Public Schools*; HB 5113, PA 13-161

## **Athletic Director Hiring Standards**

The legislature enacted a law this year requiring all newly hired athletic directors to hold a valid coaching permit in the state as well as either a teaching certificate or a national certificate from an accredited athletic administrators organization. There had been increasing concern in education circles about the dearth of hiring standards for athletic directors, who play critical roles in local school systems.

*AAC Hiring Standards for Athletic Directors*; HB 6383, PA 13-41



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

# Cleaner, Less Expensive Energy

## A Comprehensive Energy Strategy for Connecticut

Two years ago, our state took on the largest energy reforms in its history, creating a dedicated energy department and putting Connecticut on a path to a cheaper, cleaner, more reliable energy future. Those reforms directed the new department to lay out a Comprehensive Energy Strategy for the state, and this legislation begins the process of implementing it. The bill targets greater energy efficiency in our homes and businesses by incentivizing weatherization and equipment upgrades. It promotes renewable energy through low-interest financing and advanced metering technology. It facilitates tree trimming to make our electric grid more reliable during major storms, and makes converting to cleaner, cheaper natural gas an affordable proposition for hundreds of thousands of Connecticut homes and businesses.

*AAC Implementation of Connecticut's Comprehensive Energy Strategy*; HB 6360, PA 13-298

## Affordable Energy Upgrades for Businesses

When a company is able to decrease the energy it consumes, it is a win-win for both the environment and that company's bottom line. This legislation expands the new Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE), which allows commercial building owners to finance energy upgrades over time, avoiding high up-front installation costs. District heating and cooling and solar thermal or geothermal systems may now be financed through C-PACE.

*AAC The Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Program*; HB 6472, PA 13-116

## Cutting Taxes on Renewable Energy

Encouraging the development of more renewable energy is essential to the future of our economy and environment. Those who install renewable energy equipment should not be penalized for doing so. This legislation will completely exempt renewable energy equipment from property taxes, provided that the energy it generates is less than what is consumed on-site. Municipalities may choose to fully adopt or partially phase-in this exemption for the assessment year beginning October 1st. The following year, the full exemption will take effect statewide.

*AAC Property Tax Exemptions for Renewable Energy Sources*; SB 203, PA 13-61

## Extending Support for CT Clean Energy

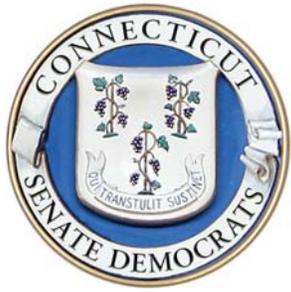
Project 150 is a statewide initiative aimed at helping developers, manufacturers and financiers to build at least 150 megawatts of new renewable power generation in our state. This year we voted to extend the program two more years, so that five projects now in the pipeline can move forward to completion. Each of these projects will utilize fuel cell technology designed and manufactured right here in Connecticut.

*AAC Contract Extensions for Project 150 Projects*; SB 946, PA 13-6

## Cheaper, Cleaner, More Reliable Energy

In 1998 Connecticut made a historic commitment to derive 20 percent of our state's electricity from renewable sources by the year 2020. In order to meet this goal more affordably, we passed legislation this year that will allow for renewables to be secured through cost-effective, long-term contracts. The bill will also harness competitively priced hydropower to drive down electric prices at times of peak demand, and reduce state support for less-than-clean biomass and landfill gas generation plants.

*AAC Connecticut's Clean Energy Goals*; SB 1138, PA 13-303



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

# Preserving Our Environment

## Researching Climate Change in Connecticut

In order to better understand the impact climate change will have on our state and shoreline, we voted this year to direct the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection and the University of Connecticut to collaborate on local climate change research. By February of next year, the two will lay out a plan for the formation of a joint Connecticut Center for Coasts. This Center will conduct research, outreach and education projects to guide the development of technologies and regulations to increase the protection of ecosystems, coastal properties and other attributes of the state that are subject to the effects of rising sea levels.

*AAC Climate Change Adaptation and Data Collection*; SB 1013, PA 13-9

## Promoting Seaweed & Shellfish Cultivation

The waters of Long Island Sound are essential to our state's economy, especially in the area of aquaculture. Cultivation of seaweed holds the potential to become a new growth industry in this field due to the plant's many uses: food, biofuel, animal feed and fertilizer, as well as in medicine, industry and other commercial applications. This bill lays out appropriate regulations to help the industry grow, including licenses for producers and a system for designating acreage in the Sound for seaweed cultivation. The bill also redirects fees collected on electric and gas lines which run under Long Island Sound into the Shellfish Fund to help that industry.

*AAC Entrepreneurial Programs for the Next Generation of Oyster Harvesters*; SB 803, PA 13-238

## Affordably Disposing of Discarded Mattresses

Old sleeping mattresses are difficult to dispose of. They occupy a large amount of space in landfills, and although their component parts can be recycled, disassembly is labor intensive. The cost of mattress disposal has become a significant expense for taxpayers in many towns. Hartford, for instance, spent \$400,000 in a single year to deal with unwanted mattresses. We voted to create a statewide mattress recycling and disposal program, led by manufacturers and retailers, and funded by a small fee on new mattress sales.

*AAC a Mattress Stewardship Program*; HB 6437, PA 13-42

## Developing Best Practices for Coastal Structures

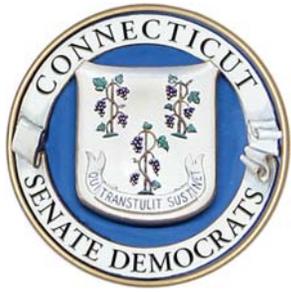
Rising sea levels and recent tropical storms have taken a toll on Connecticut's shoreline, and their harmful effects are likely to increase in the years ahead. This legislation lays out a number of best practices for coastal structures and permitting. It allows towns and property owners to temporarily fortify property before a hurricane or tropical storm, and allows applicants for shoreline flood and erosion control structures to request a hearing when the DEEP commissioner denies a permit, amongst other measures.

*AAC A Best Practices Guide for Coastal Structures and Permitting*; SB 1012, PA 13-179

## Considering Sea Level Rise and Water Pollution

Tropical Storm Irene and Hurricane Sandy caused dramatic damage along our shoreline. Some coastal sewage treatment plants lost power during the storms, resulting in sewage discharge, and many were very nearly inundated by storm surge. To avoid an even greater disaster in the future, this legislation will require the Commissioner of DEEP to consider the impact of rising sea levels when awarding loans and grants through the Clean Water Fund for the planning and construction of future water pollution control facilities.

*AAC Sea Level Rise and the Funding of Projects by the Clean Water Fund*; SB 1010, PA 13-15



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

## A Balanced Budget

Connecticut's new biennial budget is fully balanced, protects the safety net and preserves municipal aid without raising taxes. It makes targeted investments in education and economic development programs, which will help strengthen our economy. The budget:

- Does not raise income or sales taxes.
- Includes a sales tax exemption for clothing and shoes in FY 15.
- Expedites a phase-out of the electric generation tax.
- In order to address the deficit, the budget makes almost \$2.7 billion in cuts over two years, a sizeable reduction in state spending that follows a further \$6 billion in cuts which were enacted over the past four years.
- Municipal aid programs are preserved in the approved spending plan, along with key investments in economic development, public education and social services.

*AAC Expenditures and Revenue for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2015*; HB 6704; PA 13-184

## Higher Education & Employment Advancement

### Investing in Connecticut's Next Generation Economy

Connecticut has a proud history as a world leader in technological innovation, from the invention of anesthesia to the first submarine and the first helicopter. In an increasingly competitive world, we need to reclaim that spirit of innovation to stimulate economic growth and create good jobs. This year we kicked off the Next Generation Connecticut initiative, which will train thousands more young people every year to fill highly skilled jobs in the important "STEM" fields: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Building on the success of the UConn 2000 program, which transformed the University of Connecticut into the leading institution it is today, Next Generation Connecticut will invest \$1.5 billion to help the university hire innovative faculty, build new state-of-the-art facilities and enroll thousands of additional students. This investment will equip the university to conduct innovative research in partnership with our state's leading companies and industries, helping to develop their next generation of products.

*AAC Next Generation Connecticut*; SB 840, PA 13-233

### Ensuring College Classes Meet the Needs of Today's Graduates

In the rapidly changing world of higher education, flexibility and the ability to create new classes and programs of study to meet changing market needs is vital. Recently, private universities and colleges have voiced concerns about the state process of approving new programs of study. This bill ensures that a new approval process protects the rights and needs of students but at the same time allows new programs of study to be established quickly as needs arise.

*AAC Changes to Program Approval for Institutions of Higher Education*; SB 1139, PA 13-118

### Stepping Up for Butler and Sawyer School Students

When two private occupational schools closed abruptly last year, many hardworking students were caught off-guard. These students had completed their work and were entitled to a diploma, but the sudden closures meant there was no university left to give them a diploma. To help, the legislature authorized the issuance of diplomas so these students could get on with their lives and find a job.

*AAC The Butler School and The Sawyer School*; SB 200; PA 13-1



☑ Senate & House passed and signed by governor

☑ Senate passed

### **Increasing Access to E-Books**

This bill tasks the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, in consultation with the State Librarian and the Attorney General, with conducting a study on the availability of electronic books (E-books) at public libraries in Connecticut. The study will look at whether and how book publishers and third-party electronic book distributors sell, license or otherwise make electronic books available to users of public libraries in the state. The Commissioner will then present his or her findings to the General Assembly and make recommendations to increase the availability of E-books.

☑ *AAC A Study Regarding the Availability of Electronic Books to Users of Public Libraries*; HB 5614; SA 13-10

## **Ensuring Your Insurance Works For You**

### **Consumer Protection for Auto Glass Repairs**

When a car owner contacts his or her insurance company for a windshield or window repair or replacement, the insurer may well own the glass shop recommended for the repair. This session we enacted a law requiring insurance companies to inform customers of their right to choose an automotive glass repair facility. The bill also requires insurers to provide the name of at least one other glass shop if the first referral is to a glass shop owned by the insurer.

☑ *AAC Automotive Glass Work*; HB 5072; PA 13-67

### **Protecting Insurance Coverage for Families Affected by Autism**

This session we enacted a law to ensure health insurance coverage for those on the autism spectrum, prompted by a concern that some might lose benefits based upon new diagnosis criteria expected imminently from the American Psychiatric Association. Connecticut is a leader among states that provide for those with autism and their families; with this law, we underscore our long-term commitment to them. We cannot risk any backsliding in terms of health insurance coverage as a result of arbitrary diagnostic criteria from the APA.

☑ *AAC Health Insurance Coverage for Autism Spectrum Disorders*; SB 1029, PA 13-84

### **Curbing Long-Term Care Insurance Rate Increases**

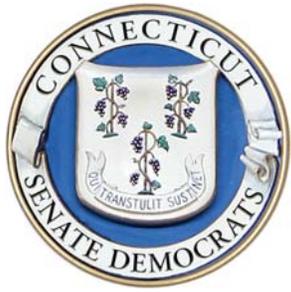
This year we sought to add another level of scrutiny for long-term care insurance rate increase requests: those in excess of 10 percent would be subject to public comment at a special symposium. The bill would have improved transparency in the insurance rate approval process and provides consumer protection for those directly impacted by prospective increases. States allowing public input during the rate approval process are said to be more successful in containing increases. This bill was not meant to deny insurers reasonable rates, but simply to allow both sides of the matter to be heard and considered by regulators. Unfortunately, this bill only passed the Senate and did not become law.

☑ *AA Requiring Public Comment for Certain Long-Term Care Policy Rate Increase Requests*; SB 808

### **Synchronized Refills for Prescription Medications**

A new law was enacted to encourage synchronized refills for those with multiple prescriptions. If the patient, practitioner and pharmacist develop a synchronized plan, certain health plans will be prohibited from denying coverage for refilling a prescription drug for a chronic illness if the refill is made according to a synchronized schedule. This will help residents avoid the inconvenience of staggered refill dates and the potential for missed doses.

☑ *AAC Synchronizing Prescription Refills*; HB 5767, PA 13-131



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

## Evaluating the Medicaid Provider Network

Even before the Affordable Care Act, the network of Medicaid providers was inadequate to meet the needs of Medicaid patients. This shortage has been exacerbated by the influx of patients who came into the Medicaid program through the Low Income Adults program. We passed legislation that requires the Medical Assistance Program Oversight Council to study obstacles to achieving an adequate health care provider network for Medicaid patients. The Council is also tasked with recommending strategies to expand access to providers and improve health outcomes for patients across racial and ethnic lines.

*AAC an Adequate Provider Network to Ensure Positive Health Outcomes for Low-Income Residents*; SB 1026; SA 13-7

## Ensuring More Drivers Possess the Necessary Qualifications to Operate Motor Vehicles

This session, the General Assembly acted to make our roads safer and increase the number of insured and qualified drivers behind the wheel. There are more than 50,000 undocumented residents in Connecticut who would be eligible to drive cars, but cannot show the proper documentation necessary in order to obtain a driver's license. Under this bill, applicants will be able to provide alternative proof of legal residence. These residents will need to apply for a driver's license, obtain the necessary insurance, and demonstrate the same capability as all Connecticut drivers. The license is for driving purposes only and will not grant them the ability to receive federal benefits.

*AAC The Issuance of Motor Vehicle Operator's Licenses*; HB 6495, PA 13-89

# A Focus On Crime

## Stamping Out Racial Profiling

Continuing important efforts to reduce racial profiling by law enforcement in Connecticut, this bill adopts the recommendations of the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project with respect to traffic stop information, and requires the filing of progress reports with the General Assembly. Specifically, the bill requires more law enforcement officers and departments to collect and report certain traffic stop information, and to adopt and follow a profiling policy.

*AAC Traffic Stop Information*; SB 1143, PA 13-75

## Protection from Sexual Assault

Current law prohibits the sexual assault of a person who is unconscious or otherwise physically unable to communicate unwillingness to engage in the act. This bill makes an important step in protecting those with physical disabilities by expanding current law to make it a crime to sexually assault a person who is physically unable to resist sexual contact.

*AAC the Sexual Assault of a Person Who is Physically Helpless or Whose Ability to Consent is Otherwise Impaired*; HB 6641, PA 13-47

## Keeping Youths Away from Gangs

In an effort to address the problem of gang violence and juvenile delinquency, this bill makes it a criminal offense to recruit a minor into a criminal gang. It also creates a pilot program in New Haven, Bridgeport and Hartford to lessen the number of youths who come into contact with the juvenile justice system and reduce recidivism among delinquents. The program will be created and administered by the Judicial Branch in collaboration with government and community organizations.

*AAC Youth Violence and Gang Activity*; HB 6703, PA 13-202



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

## Cracking Down on Illegal Dirt Bike Riding

Illegal dirt bike riding has become more than a nuisance in cities and first ring suburbs-these riders create unsafe conditions for pedestrians and motorists and decrease the quality of life for residents. Dirt bikes and ATVs are simply incompatible with most other activities in densely populated communities, and their use is a public safety hazard for riders and bystanders alike. Municipalities are able to impound dirt bikes and ATVs confiscated for illegal use. The new law increases the maximum fine from \$250 to \$1,000 for the first offense and up to \$1,500 for subsequent offenses.

*AAC the Maximum Penalty for Violation of a Municipal Ordinance Regulating the Operation or Use of a Dirt Bike, All-Terrain Vehicle or Snowmobile*; HB 6638, PA 13-154

## Immigration and Law Enforcement

This bill establishes requirements that Connecticut law enforcement officers must follow when they receive a civil immigration detainer from the Federal government for a person in their custody. It requires the officers, when determining whether to detain or release the person, to notify U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). If the person is to be detained, the officer must inform ICE that the person will be held for up to 48 hours. If ICE fails to take custody of the person within 48 hours, the officer must release the individual so long as they are not determined to be a public safety risk. The bill prohibits the holding of a person for longer than 48 hours on the sole basis of a civil immigration detainer.

*AAC Civil Immigration Detainers*; HB 6659; PA 13-155

## Stronger Background Checks

This session the General Assembly took steps to ensure people who have received mental health treatment are deemed suitable prior to having access to a firearm. Previously, an individual who has been involuntarily committed by order of the Probate Court to a hospital for psychiatric care within the previous 12 months could neither possess a firearm nor receive a permit or eligibility certificate. The new law expands that look-back period to 60 months for those receiving permits or eligibility certificates. Additionally, the new law bars an individual who has been voluntarily admitted for psychiatric care from receiving a permit, eligibility certificate or possessing any firearm for 6 months following their release from the hospital.

*AAC Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety*; SB 1160, PA 13-3

## Cracking Down on Gun Trafficking

In order to stem the flow of illegal firearms from other states into Connecticut, the General Assembly voted to provide \$1 million in funding for the State Gun Trafficking Task Force to investigate illegal gun transfers, transportation and possession and to trace guns seized by law enforcement. The law also stiffens criminal penalties for individuals who knowingly sell guns that are stolen or that have had the serial number altered, removed or obliterated.

*AAC Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety*; SB 1160, PA 13-3



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

# Standing With Connecticut's Workers

## Relief for Working Families

In a victory for working men and women across Connecticut, the General Assembly voted to increase in the hourly minimum wage 75 cents over two years, from \$8.25 an hour to \$9 an hour. Raising the minimum wage will go a long way toward providing a bit more income for entry-level workers who often live near the poverty line. The last minimum wage increase took effect in 2010; the next won't take effect until 2014.

*AA Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage*; SB 387, PA 13-117

## Protecting Your Privacy

With the proliferation of social media like Twitter and Facebook, some companies feel entitled to know about an employee's (or potential employee's) online profiles and other private information. This bill would prevent an employer from requesting or requiring a current employee—or even just a job applicant—to provide their passwords to personal online accounts. Unfortunately, this bill only passed the Senate and did not become law.

*AAC Employee Privacy*; SB 159

## Do You Know What's in Your Personnel File?

This bill helps level the playing field for both employees and employers because, often, decisions regarding an employee's wages or termination are made based on what's in their personnel file. But have you ever seen your personnel file? This bill ensures that employees have a right to copies of their personnel files, as well as hard copies of documents relating to disciplinary actions.

*AAC Employee Access to Personnel Files*; SB 910, PA 13-176

## Social Security Benefits

This bill allows municipalities to hold referenda so voters can decide whether to have their police and firefighters contribute to the federal Social Security trust and then receive benefits when eligible. Current law prohibits municipal police and firefighters covered under state (Connecticut Municipal Employee Retirement System) or local retirement systems from participating in the Social Security system. This bill removes that prohibition for police and fire service performed on or after August 16, 1994.

*AAC Police Officers and Firefighters*; HB 6596, PA 13-153



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

# Improving Connecticut's Health Care System

## Improving Health Care with Cultural Competency

As the diversity of Connecticut's population continues to grow, it has become increasingly important for medical professionals to recognize the cultural nuances of their patients. Disparities have been documented in health care that results in certain racial and ethnic groups experiencing a lower quality of care. Examination has shown these disparities are caused by cultural misunderstandings, even when all other factors are eliminated. The General Assembly passed a bill based on leading recommendations that these discrepancies be eliminated by requiring social workers, professional counselors, alcohol and drug counselors, and marriage and family therapists to complete one continuing education hour in cultural competency each year.

*AA Requiring Licensed Social Workers, Counselors, and Therapists to Complete Continuing Education Course Work in Cultural Competency*; SB 366; PA 13-76

## Making Behavioral for Children a Priority

The Sandy Hook tragedy put a spotlight on mental illness in our state, yet many of our state's physicians may not be prepared to properly address their patients' mental health needs. The General Assembly recently considered a bill that adds behavioral health to the list of mandatory topics for physicians' continuing medical education.

*AAC Continuing Education Courses for Physicians*; SB 466, PA 13-217

## Improving Connecticut's Palliative Care

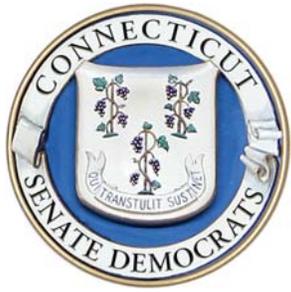
Palliative care is an area of health care that focuses on relieving and preventing the suffering of patients, and is often provided to individuals with serious or chronic illnesses. This session we passed a bill that establishes a Palliative Care Advisory Council. This newly established council will analyze the current state of palliative care in Connecticut and advise the Department of Public Health on ways to improve palliative care and enhance the quality of life for people with serious or chronic illnesses.

*AAC An Advisory Council on Palliative Care, SB 991*; PA 13-55

## Creating a Bill of Rights for Connecticut's Homeless

The bill establishes a bill of rights for Connecticut's homeless population. The bill of rights states that homeless individuals have the right to move freely in public places, to have equal employment opportunities, to receive emergency medical care, to register to vote and vote, to have their personal information protected and a reasonable expectation of privacy in their personal property, and to receive equal treatment by state and local agencies.

*AAC A Homeless Person's Bill of Rights*; SB 896, PA 13-251



☑ Senate & House passed and signed by governor

S Senate passed

# Standing Up For Our Veterans

## Helping Veterans Put Their Skills to Work

With the goal of aiding veterans in securing employment, this bill establishes a task force that will be responsible for reviewing military occupational training experience and determine if any such training is equivalent to that required for state licensing purposes. Our veterans could use some help finding a job when they come home, and this legislation will help them put their existing skills to work.

☑ *AA Establishing a Task Force to Study the Use of Military Occupational Specialty Training as a Substitute for State Licensing Requirements*; HB 5387, SA 13-5

## A Local Point of Contact for Veterans

This bill requires cities and towns in Connecticut to appoint an employee to serve as a veterans' service contact person. This person will act as an ombudsman that guides veterans to the appropriate local, state or federal resources. Municipalities that currently have a full-time veterans' representative or provide funding to have access to one would be exempt. Our veterans deserve a friendly face at town hall to connect them with the benefits they have earned through their service.

☑ *AA Requiring Cities and Towns to Designate a Veterans' Service Contact Person*; HB 5388; PA 13-34

## Providing Aid to Deployed Soldiers & Their Families

The Military Family Relief Fund provides grants to help the immediate family of Connecticut's service members pay for essential household goods or services. Many such families endure hardship because of their soldier's service, and the Fund provides assistance with repairs, uninsured medical services, transportation, babysitting, clothing, school supplies and other goods or services essential to the relatives' well-being. This bill will also allow the soldier themselves to benefit from the Fund directly.

☑ *AAC The State Military Relief Fund*; HB 6349, PA 13-107

## Restoring Benefits for "Don't Ask Don't Tell" Soldiers

From 1993 to 2011, the United States government adhered to a shamefully discriminatory policy known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" which prohibited openly homosexual persons from serving in the armed forces. This bill restores state benefits for military veterans who were previously denied federal benefits based solely on their sexual orientation. We cannot undo the discrimination these soldiers unjustly faced, but we can now begin to make amends.

☑ *AA Restoring Benefits to Veterans Discharged Under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"*; SB 70, PA 13-48

## Lowering Property Taxes for Disabled Veterans

This legislation will help lighten the property tax burden of disabled veterans. Under current law, veterans with a 100% disability rating from the US Department of Veterans Affairs may already receive a property tax exemption of up to \$3,000, as well as an additional \$6,000 with qualifying household income. This bill permits municipalities to increase the income-dependent exemption to \$9,000. The state would reimburse towns to make up the difference.

☑ *AA Establishing a Municipal Option to Provide an Additional Property Tax Exemption for One-Hundred Percent Disabled Veterans*; SB 383, PA 13-224

## Awarding Honorary Diplomas to Vietnam Veterans

This bill permits local and regional school boards to award high school diplomas to Vietnam-era veterans who left high school before graduating in order to serve in the military. Those who did so got a very different sort of education, and made countless other sacrifices as well. These diplomas will honor their service and sacrifice, just as has been done previously for World War II and Korean War veterans.

☑ *AAC Honorary Diplomas for Vietnam Veterans*; SB 386, PA 13-57



Senate & House passed and signed by governor

Senate passed

### **Ensuring Soldiers Overseas Can Vote**

This voting reform legislation directs the Connecticut Secretary of the State to select a secure method by which military members serving overseas may return their ballots to Connecticut (for example, by e-mail or fax). Recent reports have found that some absentee ballots transmitted to members of the military overseas never arrive, and among those that do, many are not successfully returned to the state. Our veterans fight for our democracy, and we must do all we can to ensure they can also participate in it.

*AAC Voting By Members of the Military Serving Overseas*; SB 647, PA 13-185

### **Protecting the Jobs of Those Who Serve**

This bill protects employees who serve or served in the military from workplace discrimination due to their service. Specifically, it extends the employment protections currently afforded to employees who are U.S. armed forces reservists or National Guard members to members of the state armed forces who take time from their employment to perform ordered military duty. Soldiers should never be penalized for serving their state and country.

*AAC Military Leave From Employment*; SB 835, PA 13-49