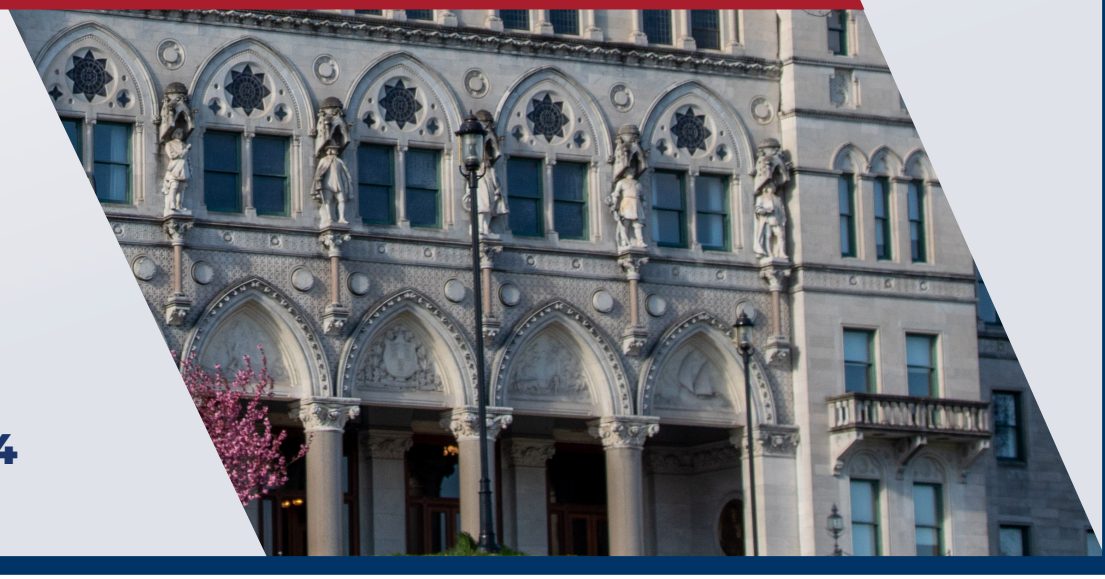


STEPHEN HARDING
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

HENRI MARTIN
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER
PRO TEMPORE

2024

Legislative Summary



JULY 2024

BAD BILLS WE STOPPED

During the 2024 Legislative Session, much of the efforts were spent fighting bad policies that would have increased costs for Connecticut citizens, greatly expanded the power of unelected bureaucrats, further eroded election security, and continued to put unreasonable burdens on our small businesses. While we were unable to stop every damaging bill, we successfully thwarted new laws and regulations that would be costly, burdensome, and unnecessary for the people of Connecticut.

BILLS INCREASING COSTS FOR ALL

The Majority Democrats are never at a loss to find opportunities to collect more of your money, increasing your cost of living. Through a plethora of seemingly (but not always) well-intentioned bills, there is a constant attack on the wallets of hardworking residents and families in Connecticut. Whether through direct costs, utility bills, or taxes, these policies would have made our state even more expensive.

There were several measures advertised to address the climate change "crisis," which would have increased your cost of living, eliminated your choices, and made the state less competitive. While our Caucus supports efforts to move to cleaner energy sources, we must do so in a common sense way that does not overburden our residents.







House Bill 5004, ***An Act Concerning the Implementation of Certain Climate Change Measures,*** would have created new government bureaucracy, forced costly heat pumps on residents, and sought to phase out natural gas from our energy choices (and your gas stove). This bill was so extreme, that it earned the nickname of the "Green Monster."

Senate Bill 11, ***An Act Concerning Connecticut Resiliency Planning and Providing Municipal Options for Climate Resilience,*** was another monster bill that would have given the government extraordinary powers over your life and a pathway to a surcharge on your insurance policies to fund climate resiliency funds.

House Bill 5485, ***An Act Concerning Transportation Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles,*** would have begun the implementation of the wildly unpopular EV mandate that would have increased energy costs and reduced your transportation choices.

Additionally, two other utility-related bills would have driven up your costs: **Senate Bill 137**, ***An Act Concerning Gas, Electric, Sewer and Water Delivery Work***, would force the prevailing wage law on utility projects while allowing the utilities to pass the additional costs onto you.

Senate Joint Resolution 193, ***A Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution Regarding Environmental Rights,*** would have created a legal nightmare by allowing any citizen to sue the state over any perceived environmental issue.

Senate Bill 149, ***An Act Concerning Foreclosure, Assignment, and Other Enforcement Actions for Unpaid Sewer Assessments, and Other Fees and Charges,*** would have limited sewer authorities' ability to collect unpaid bills, thus forcing them to spread the costs to paying customers.

Many bills would have increased expenses in the state budget, but one worth mentioning is **Senate Bill 414**, ***An Act Concerning Equity in State Employment,*** which would have established a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) division within every state department administered by full-time, salaried DEI directors, and would have given unelected bureaucrats unfettered power over agency policies and decisions.

Thankfully, through our efforts, none of these bills advanced to become law, providing some protection for your wallet.







ATTACKS ON SMALL BUSINESS

The Majority also proposed many bills that would have increased costs and placed burdensome new regulations on the economic drivers of Connecticut: small businesses.

Probably the most egregious is **House Bill 5164**, ***An Act Concerning Unemployment Benefits,*** which would have provided unemployment benefits to workers who choose to strike, an unprecedented attack on business.



Senate Bill 409, *An Act Concerning Wage Theft Responsibility,* would have made anyone who hires a subcontractor liable for the wages of the subcontractor's employees, even though that responsibility is on the subcontractor.

Senate Bill 412, *An Act Concerning the Protection of Warehouse Workers in the State,* would have placed onerous regulations on warehouse facilities, discouraging the placement or expansion of these facilities in our state.

Senate Bill 221, *An Act Concerning the Minimum Fair Wage and Service Charges* would have hurt restaurants, service industry workers, and consumers by completely disrupting the tip credit system, a proposal neither restaurants nor restaurant workers wanted for their industry.



GOVERNMENT EXPANSION

Senate Republicans thwarted two attempts to unreasonably amend the state constitution. **Senate Joint Resolution 4,** *A Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment Concerning Discrimination on the Basis of Sex Under The Equal Protection Clause,* would have made gender identity and gender-affirming care a constitutional right.



ELECTION SECURITY

Despite the national embarrassment of extensive video footage of a City of Bridgeport employee allegedly stuffing various absentee ballot boxes multiple times the Majority continues to make attempts to undermine election integrity. **House Bill 5057**, *An Act Standardizing Drive-Only Licenses,* would have made drive-only licenses—i.e. the ones given to non-citizens—look exactly like regular licenses, making it harder for election workers to prevent voter fraud.

House Bill 5412, *An Act Concerning Identification and Citizenship Status Information Requested in Obtaining a Marriage License,* would have prohibited a registrar of vital statistics from asking an applicant for a marriage license for a social security number or citizenship status.





HOUSING

There were many proposed bills that would negatively impact the housing market. **Senate Bill 143**, ***An Act Concerning Evictions for Cause,*** would have allowed tenants to remain in rentals beyond the mutually agreed-upon lease term indefinitely–making it more difficult for landlords to remove problematic or dangerous tenants.

House Bill 5242, ***An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of Criminal Records on Housing Opportunities,*** would make renters less safe by disallowing landlords' consideration of the criminal records of prospective tenants.

Senate Bill 6, ***An Act Concerning Housing,*** and **Senate Bill 207**, ***An Act Concerning Housing Authority Jurisdiction,*** would have eliminated local control by expanding housing authority jurisdiction, such that one municipality's housing authority could operate subsidized housing projects in another municipality without the approval of the host municipality. Senate Bill 6 would have created additional tax burdens and forced municipalities to adopt or build more "affordable" housing units or risk losing state funds.







MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to pushing damaging bills, the Majority was presented with countless opportunities to improve our state with commonsense proposals that would have improved the lives of Connecticut residents. Whether our proposals would have reduced financial hardships, made for safer streets, or eliminated costly mandates on our municipalities, the Majority chose to pass on these opportunities. Most concerning, despite the national embarrassment caused by Bridgeport ballot box stuffing videos, the Democrats refused to make any meaningful reforms to provide greater election security.



MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO SECURE OUR ELECTIONS



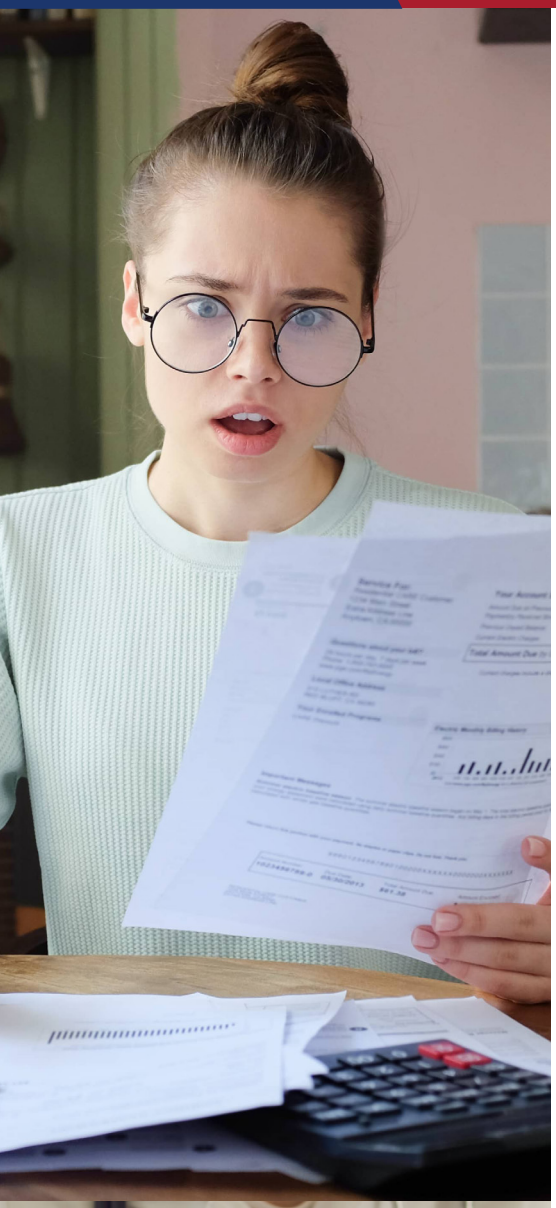
The Senate Republican Caucus proposed bills and amendments that would help secure our elections and avoid the disenfranchisement that happened in Bridgeport. The Majority Democrats thwarted our efforts to implement common sense regulations for this process.

Republican proposals would have:

- Prohibited the mailing or delivering of unsolicited absentee ballot applications
- Required audits of same-day/Election Day registration ballots, as well as absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots to ensure voters live at the address where the application was sent and from where the absentee ballot vote was cast
- Required mandatory minimum sentences for various election crimes
- Required the Secretary of the State (SOTS) to develop and implement a signature verification system for purposes of matching voter signatures on absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots
- Required photo ID to vote in-person and by absentee ballot, and provided free photo IDs to anyone unable to afford one, and free photocopying of such IDs for purposes of absentee ballot voting



These affordable and common sense proposals were rejected along party lines, an unfortunate missed opportunity to restore integrity to voting in Connecticut.





MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO REDUCE FINANCIAL BURDENS ON OUR CITIZENS

ENERGY

Given the high cost of living in Connecticut, our Caucus is always looking for commonsense ways to reduce the financial burden on residents. With our energy costs being amongst the highest in the country, this is a logical place to start. As with Republicans' election integrity proposals, these proposals offered a principled approach to lower the pressures on our constituents.

The proposals would have:

- Limited all future Power Purchase Agreements so that no contract can be for more than 150% over the wholesale electric market
- Redefined Class I renewable energy sources to include all forms of hydropower and all nuclear power to lower the cost of these energy sources and bring relief to ratepayers
- Separated the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA)
- Studied ways to increase natural gas supply in the New England Region
- Studied moving public policy charges off of ratepayer bills and into the budget

These low-cost, common sense proposals were rejected along party lines—an unfortunate missed opportunity to restore some balance to reduce our energy costs.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Unfortunately, one of the more watched and anticipated proposed bills, **House Bill 5247,** ***An Act Concerning Employee Health Benefit Consortiums*** (a.k.a. Association Health Plans), was also left behind by the Majority. Association Health Plans are health plans that allow small groups to pool risk and aggregate insurance premiums to drive down the cost of insurance for participating members. Small business owners, various nonprofit organizations, and many elected officials have been calling for Association Health Plans to no avail. These plans are seen as a game changer for the small businesses and nonprofits struggling under the weight of crushing healthcare costs and out-of-control insurance premiums.

EDUCATION

Recently, the Majority forced a top-down, one-size-fits-all, and hugely expensive reading curriculum mandate on our local boards of education. Even school systems that had testing above proficiency are being forced to undertake this program. Our Caucus offered several proposals to ease this unfunded state mandate, but again the Majority voted **against local control** and **for higher local taxes** by rejecting our amendments.



JOBS

Despite significant support, **Senate Bill 135**, ***An Act Establishing a Maximum Charge for Certain Occupational Licenses, Certifications, Permits and Registrations,*** would have capped many professional license fees at $100 per year and would have provided much-needed relief for working families in our state.





MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE CONNECTICUT SAFER

House Bill 5413, ***An Act Concerning the Illegal Use of Certain Vehicles and Street Takeovers,*** would have provided municipalities with more authority in dealing with street takeovers, including allowing them to destroy confiscated ATVs, dirt bikes, and mini-motorcycles, and allowing them to pass ordinances with fines of $1,000 to $2,000, increasing for repeated violations. This bill would have included the suspension, up to permanent revocation, of an individual's driving license for participation in a street takeover.

Senate Bill 445, ***An Act Concerning a Jobs Program for Youth Impacted by the Juvenile Justice System, Review of Probation Violations and State-Wide Expansion of Truancy Clinics,*** would have built upon the successful truancy clinic program by expanding it state-wide. It also would have established a jobs program for youth impacted by the juvenile justice system.

Senate Bill 359, ***An Act Concerning Services Provided by the Department of Children and Families to Relatives of a Person Whose Death was Caused by Intimate Partner Violence,*** would have required DCF to assign an intimate partner violence specialist to instances where one parent murdered another parent and identify family members who could potentially care for the child.

Senate Bill 233, ***An Act Authorizing Use of Steady Blue Lights on Wreckers,*** would have permitted tow trucks to display steady blue lights when stationary on the side of the road to prevent further tragedies of drivers hitting them.

House Bill 5281, ***An Act Allowing a Personal Income Tax Deduction for Stipends Paid to Volunteer Firefighters or Emergency Medical Services Personnel,*** would have allowed a personal income tax deduction for a stipend paid by a municipality to a volunteer firefighter, fire police officer, or ambulance member to further aid in recruitment/retention.

NEW STATE LAWS

Despite significant challenges, our Caucus was able to secure the passage of many important bills that will improve the lives of Connecticut residents.

HEALTH CARE

Senate Bill 308, *An Act Concerning Wheelchair Repair Requirements,* implements recommendations on timely wheelchair repair for individuals with complex rehabilitation technology, giving them faster access to regaining their mobility.

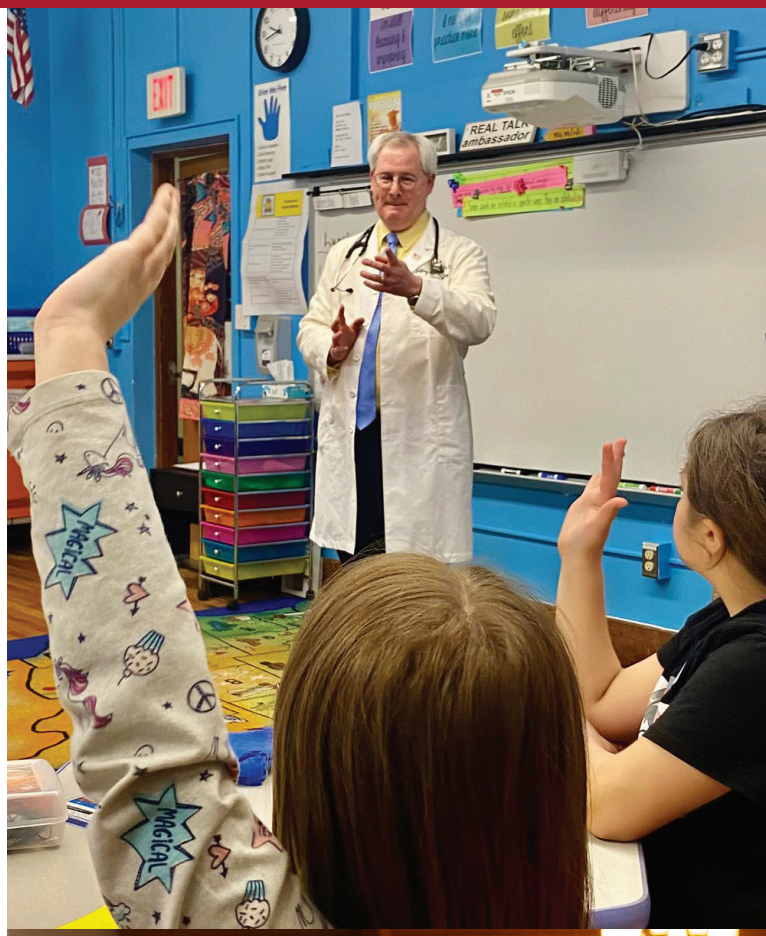
Senate Bill 215, *An Act Concerning Youth Camps,* increases inspection requirements for Youth Camps to ensure the well-being of children and allows the state to deny a new license to an individual who has had a license revoked in another state.

Senate Bill 307, *An Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage of Biomarker Testing,* improves outcomes for Medicaid enrollees afflicted with cancer and other diseases by utilizing biomarker testing to help guide treatment.

House Bill 5367, *An Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage of Rapid Whole Genome Sequencing for Critically Ill Infants and Studies Concerning the Elimination or Reduction of The Katie Beckett Waiver Program Waiting List and Medicaid Coverage of Diapers,* requires Medicaid to include rapid whole genome sequencing for critically ill infants.

Senate Bill 1, *An Act Concerning the Health and Safety of Connecticut Residents,* requires coverage for coronary calcium scans and provides more training and additional resources to home healthcare workers.

House Bill 5046, *An Act Promoting Nursing Home Resident Quality of Life,* begins the process of limiting beds in nursing homes to no more than two per room and establishes presumptive eligibility for home care.











VETERANS

Senate Bill 235, *An Act Concerning Military Leave Provisions Under the State Personnel Act,* facilitates the use of paid leave for military training purposes for state employees.

Senate Bill 238, *An Act Expanding Eligibility for Grants From The Military Relief Fund,* allows grants from the Military Relief Fund for essential household goods or services if a hardship to a serious injury or illness, or the death of an eligible service member or an immediate family member occurs.

House Bill 5404, *An Act Concerning Military Training And Experience and the Driver's License Endorsement to Operate Fire Apparatus,* allows a Veteran within two years of leaving service who drove trucks similar to firetrucks during their service to be approved for a "Q" driver's license endorsement by the DMV.

Senate Joint Resolution 6, *A Resolution Recognizing and Honoring Veterans of the Vietnam War who were Exposed to Agent Orange,* recognizes Vietnam Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange.



FIRST RESPONDERS

Senate Bill 339, ***An Act Requiring Restitution When a Police Animal or Dog in a Volunteer Canine Search and Rescue Team is Injured or Killed,*** "Broko's Bill" requires an order of restitution to the law enforcement unit that owns a police dog when such dog is intentionally injured or killed.

House Bill 5500, ***An Act Concerning Revisions to Various Laws Concerning Ignition Interlock Devices, The Department of Correction, Judicial Retirement Salaries and Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure,*** allows the victim of a crime in which the defendant was found not guilty of a crime due to mental disease or defect to obtain a criminal protective order (current law required a defendant to be found guilty).

Senate Bill 341, ***An Act Establishing a Fallen Officer Fund and Providing Health Insurance Coverage to Survivors of a Police Officer Killed in the Line of Duty,*** establishes a fund that will provide $100,000 payments to the surviving family of a police officer killed in the line of duty, and permit the family to stay on the officer's health insurance for a period of time.

House Bill 5279, ***An Act Concerning Authority To Declare That a Firefighter, Police Officer or Emergency Medical Service Personnel Died in the Line Of Duty,*** provides a police, fire, or EMS chief or administrative head to declare that a police officer, uniformed paid or volunteer firefighter, or EMS personnel died in the line of duty if the death was caused by a cardiac event, stroke, or pulmonary embolism within 24 hours after the officer, firefighter, or EMS personnel finished a shift or training.









LOCAL CONTROL

Senate Bill 333, *An Act Concerning Local Charter Revisions,* begins the process of undoing the "Stamford Rat" that was snuck into a bill last year and restores the rights of towns and cities to make certain decisions in their town and city charters about planning and zoning, eminent domain, and the disposition of property.

House Bill 5507, *An Act Concerning Certain Proceedings Relating to Electric Transmission Lines and the Membership and Processes of the Connecticut Siting Council,* requires that applicants for transmission lines consult with local state legislators and a municipality's legislative body and increases the amount the applicant pays to local governments to offset costs incurred in reviewing proposals.

ELECTIONS

House Bill 5466, *An Act Concerning the Period of Time During Which Elections-Related Crimes May be Prosecuted,* modifies the statute of limitations on prosecuting an elections-related crime to the later of the existing statute of limitations period or six months from when the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) refers the complaint to the chief state's attorney.



ENVIRONMENT

Senate Bill 292, *An Act Concerning the Use of PFAS in Certain Products,* regulates the sale and use of certain products containing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and requires disclosure of PFAS in certain products. Starting in 2028, the bill bans manufacturing, selling, or offering or distributing for sale of certain products if they contain intentionally added PFAS.

House Bill 5219, *An Act Concerning Standards for the Spraying of Herbicides Along Railroad Right-Of-Ways,* expands the types of information that railroads must include in their vegetation management plans and imposes method-and area-specific restrictions on applications in the railroad rights-of-way, such as those near public surface water sources, private wells, or wetlands.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Senate Bill 117, *An Act Concerning Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridors,* increases the number of Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridors from three (3) to seven (7) locations. The purpose of the MLKCs is to spur development in urban areas, specifically concentrating on the areas of housing, education, and economic development. This program is intended to be leveraged with existing programs such as Enterprise Zones and the like.

Senate Bill 248, *An Act Establishing the Connecticut-Ireland Trade Commission,* establishes a 23-member trade commission that will advance yearly bilateral trade and investment, initiate joint action on policy issues of mutual interest, and promote business and academic exchanges between the state and Ireland.

House Bill 5189, *An Act Concerning a Small Harbor Improvement Projects Account,* requires the Connecticut Port Authority (CPA) to establish the "Small Harbor Improvement Projects Account" and to spend funds to initiate small harbor improvement projects consistent with state statute. The law defines "small harbor" as any Connecticut harbor not under CPA authority.





CONSUMER PROTECTION

Senate Bill 123, *An Act Concerning Coerced Debt,* creates a mechanism for an alleged victim of "coerced debt" to report said coerced debt to a debt collector or a credit rating agency and states that all collection activity must cease if there is an allegation of coerced debt.

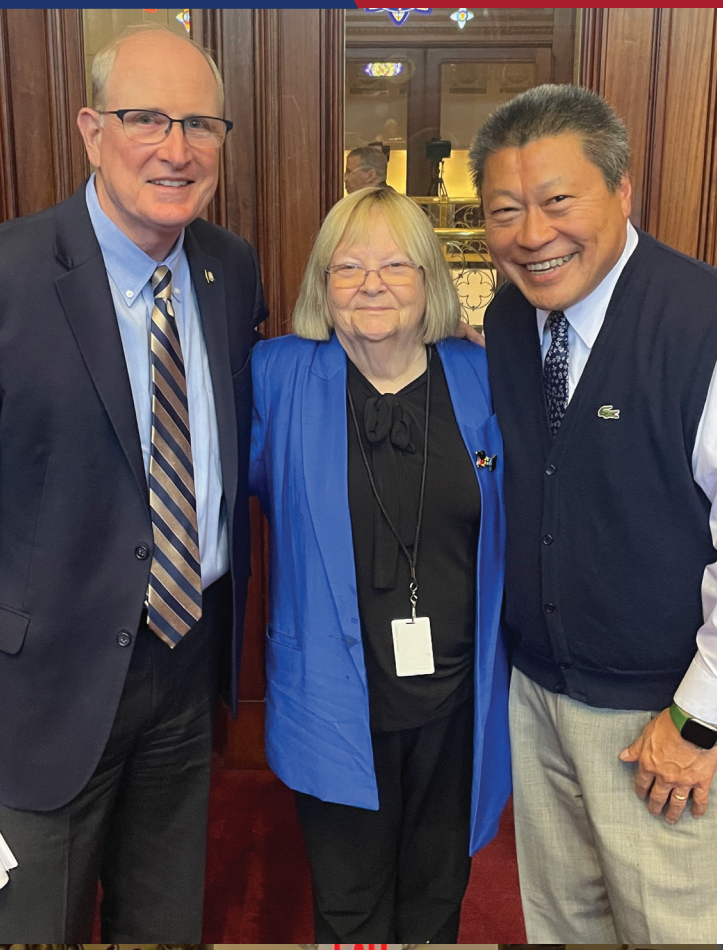
House Bill 5211, *An Act Concerning Virtual Currency and Money Transmission,* is designed to expand protections for consumers who use virtual currently kiosks.







FISCAL GUARDRAILS/BUDGET/ARPA ISSUES



Due to limited room under the spending and revenue caps, the Majority in the legislature chose not to adjust the State Budget and did not address some expected deficiencies, including required pension payments. The budget-related bill that was run, **House Bill 5523**, ***An Act Concerning Allocations of Federal American Rescue Plan Act Funds and Provisions Related to General Government, Human Services, Education and the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025,*** contained three main components: reallocations of $370 million in federal ARPA funds, addressing current year deficiencies and various implementing legislation for policy priorities that were not acted on by both chambers.

Since the bill did not amend the budget for Fiscal Year 2025, it is anticipated that some accounts will be over the budgeted amount. To better address in-year deficiencies, the bill broadened the Governor's authority to move money within agencies, allowing for a joint legislative and executive branch committee authority to make other changes.





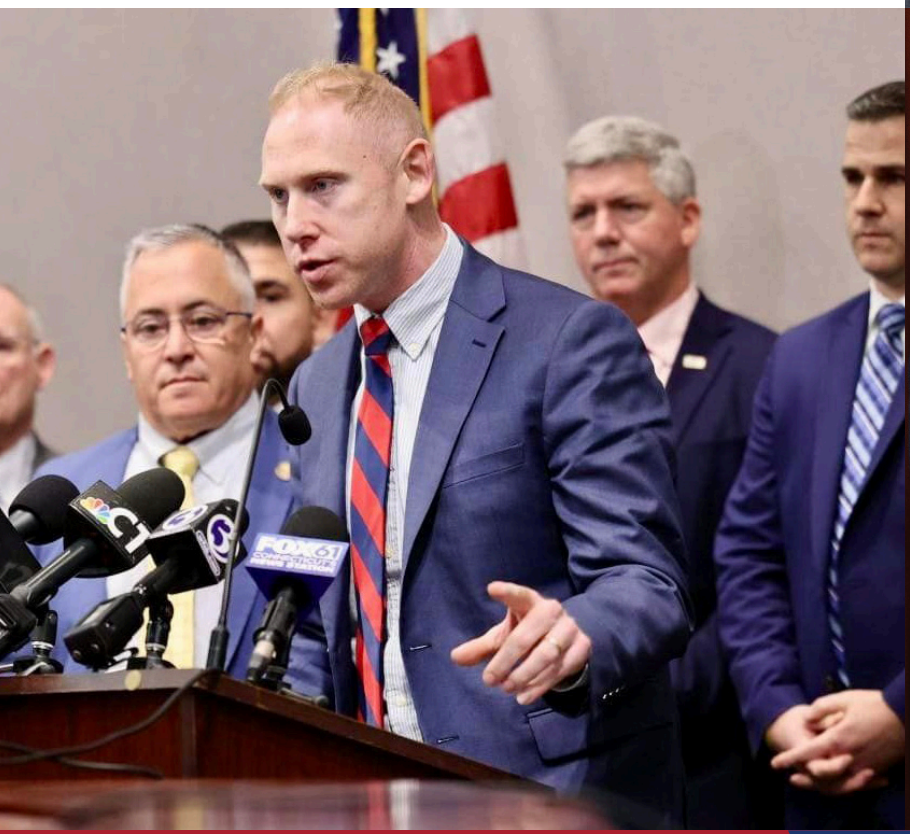
BAD BILLS THAT PASSED



While our Caucus stopped many bad bills and fought for common sense legislation, we were not able to thwart every attempt by the Democrats.

A representation of the true “camel’s nose under the tent” comes from **House Bill 5005**, ***An Act Expanding Paid Sick Days in the State***. Despite promises made when the original law was passed, this new law burdens small businesses by forcing paid sick leave requirements on businesses with as few as one employee (it currently only applies to employers with 50 or more employees). It also changes the accrual rate from 1 hour for every 40 hours worked to 1 hour for every 30 hours worked. It eliminates the ability of an employer to request documentation or reasonable advance notice if the use of paid sick leave is foreseeable. The bill also creates additional record requirements for employers and establishes civil penalties for failure to comply with these new record requirements.



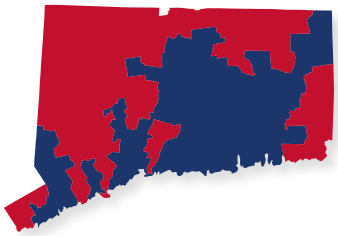








While the Governor vetoed this bill, it is worth mentioning **House Bill 5431**, ***An Act Establishing the Stabilization Support and ARPA Replacement Fund***. Surrounded by controversy and wrapped in vagueness, the limited language of the bill establishes a slush fund that would ostensibly be used to pay unemployment benefits to striking workers. The language does not state that, but the intentions of the bill were made clear by the proponents. This is another attack on private businesses in our state and we thank the Governor for doing the right thing.



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