

Connecticut Smart Start



Raising the Minimum Wage



Consumer Privacy



Senate Democrats 2014 End of Session report



STEP-Up



Electric Supplier Marketing



Aerospace Investment

Donald Williams, *President Pro Tempore* ~ Martin M. Looney, *Majority Leader*
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Senate & House passed

Senate passed

Providing High-Quality Early Learning Experiences

A Historic Step Toward Universal Pre-K

Recognizing there is no better way to set students on a path to lifelong learning success than a high quality pre-kindergarten (pre-K) experience, the General Assembly approved the Connecticut Smart Start program that will provide 50,000 more children with a vital early education experience.

The initiative will allow districts with unmet preschool needs in their communities to establish or expand the number of pre-K classrooms in their public schools.

It is a fact that quality preschool or pre-K reduces the achievement gap and ensures that all children are ready to learn when they arrive at kindergarten. Every dollar invested in pre-K saves \$7 in avoided special and remedial education costs, criminal justice costs and better health outcomes. Children who experience quality pre-K have improved performance and behavior in the classroom, are more likely to read at grade level, have higher high school graduation rates, and are less likely to smoke or be involved in crime.

AAC Establishing the Connecticut Smart Start Program; SB 25, PA 14-41

Creating Lifelong Learners

This bill is a compliment to the Smart Start program, creating a coordinated system of early child development and education. It expands school readiness opportunities in the school districts of greatest need and establishes an Office of Early Childhood that will promote universal pre-K, includes licensing and quality assurance associated with preschool, and directs the inclusion of dyslexia in individualized education plans.

AA Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education and Concerning Dyslexia; SB 5562, PA 14-39

Identifying Dyslexia

Some have estimated that up to one in five children suffer from Dyslexia. This bill requires that the individualized education program form used for determining the need and potential services for special education contain a checkbox to indicate that the student has dyslexia. Additionally, the bill requires that dyslexia detection and education be taught in our teacher preparation programs in Connecticut.

AA Establishing the Office of Early Childhood, Expanding Opportunities for Early Childhood Education and Concerning Dyslexia and Special Education; HB 5562, PA 14-39



Growing Jobs, Assisting Small Businesses, Training Workers

Building on Small Business Success

The Subsidized Training and Employment Program, better known as “STEP-Up,” has been extremely successful across our state. This year we added \$10 million in additional funding to help small businesses hire more workers. The program subsidizes new employees (previously unemployed workers) for a 6-month period, gradually phasing out the subsidy during that time. Last year, close to 90 percent of workers hired using funds from STEP-Up continued on the job after the six-month period.

AA Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and Other Purposes; SB 29, PA 14-98

Senate & House passed

Senate passed

Promoting Aerospace Innovation

United Technologies (UTC) has been Connecticut’s leading employer and a world-class manufacturer for generations. This legislation formalizes an agreement between UTC and the state, as UTC recommit to its ongoing presence in our state, and makes substantial investments not only in cutting-edge research facilities but also in human capital. In exchange for redeeming previously earned tax credits, UTC will invest up to \$500 million to upgrade and expand its aerospace research, development and manufacturing facilities over the next five years, and invest up to \$4 billion in other capital expenditures in the state. The agreement will have a direct or indirect impact on more than 75,000 jobs in Connecticut.

AAC the Connecticut Aerospace Reinvestment Act; HB 5465, PA 14-2

Retaining Businesses in Our State

Small business owners often grapple with how to retire without selling their business to an unknown entity. Employee Stock Ownership Programs (known as “ESOPs”) offer an excellent alternative for owners to have a succession plan in place they can feel good about. These programs allow business owners to establish a trust for their current workers to invest in their own company. The fund is similar to a 401K, but allows them to ultimately take ownership of the business. This bill requires the Department of Economic and Community Development to provide education about how to establish an ESOP.

AA Establishing an Employee Ownership Program to Promote Business Retention and Growth; SB 3

Helping Companies Do Well and Do Good

Social Benefit Corporations are rapidly making their way across the country as an alternative model to traditional corporations who are obligated to make ‘profit’ their only mission. This year, Connecticut became the 18th state to pass legislation establishing “B Corps” as an alternative business model. Companies like Patagonia and King Arthur Flour are known across the world for doing well while doing good. This year, we have established a legal framework for forming a for-profit corporation that simultaneously pursues both social benefits and shareholder profits.

AA Implementing Provisions of the State Budget for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015; HB 5597, PA 14-217



☑ Senate & House passed

☑ Senate passed

Protecting Consumers

Strengthening the Do-Not-Call List

Unwanted and intrusive telemarketing calls and texts are on the rise. This bill explicitly bans telemarketers from text and media messaging along with raising the fines from the current level of \$11,000 to \$20,000, and it establishes a system to increase consumers' awareness of how and where to make complaints of violations.

- ☑ *AA Prohibiting Unsolicited Commercial Text Messages and Increasing Penalties for Violations of the Do Not Call Registry; SB 209, PA 14-53*

Increasing Transparency at the Gas Pump

Gas retailers often offer a discounted price for payment with cash instead of a credit card. However, many retailers do not clarify if debit cards are treated as cash or credit. This bill makes that distinction to better inform consumers.

- ☑ *AAC the Use of Debit Cards for Gasoline Purchases and Notification to Handicapped Drivers of Self-Service Pump Refueling; HB 5259, PA 14-16*

Protecting Electric Consumers

Too many electric customers have signed up for electric service on the promise of low rates, only to be shocked after opening their bills. This legislation puts in place many new consumer protections for electric customers, with a focus on transparency in account information and advertised supplier offers. When customers shop for electric service, they should know exactly what is being offered, and what their current rate and terms are. This bill will make that information and more available on customer's monthly bills, in periodic reminders, online and in advertising materials.

- ☑ *AAC Electric Customer Consumer Protection and Clarifying the Property Tax Exemption for Certain Solar Thermal or Geothermal Renewable Energy Sources; SB 2, PA 14-75*

Safeguarding Your Medical History

Several pharmacies offer prescription drug discount programs which can be attractive to consumers facing high prescription drug costs. However, consumers do not realize that when they sign up for these programs they are often allowing the pharmacy access to their entire health history and the right to sell and profit off of their personal health information for marketing and other purposes. This bill will require pharmacies to clearly define in layman's terms—on webpages and other promotional materials—the privacy rights a consumer is giving away by enrolling in the program. This new law will ensure that customers know what they are signing away when they sign up.

- ☑ *AAC Pharmacy Rewards Programs and Protected Health Information; SB 208, PA 14-197*

Reducing Water Rates

After recent protests by towns that were charged new, higher MDC fees and by residents who saw significant increases in their water bills, new legislation requires the Metropolitan District Commission to charge all customers at uniform rates and gives nonmember towns representation on the MDC board.

- ☑ *AA Amending the Charter of The Metropolitan District in Hartford County; SB 332, SA 14-21*



Senate & House passed

Senate passed

Protecting Homeowners

Some “storm chaser” or “fly-by-night” contractors from out-of-state offer their services at high prices without having proper state registration and with no way for a consumer to verify their credentials. This bill weeds out the scams and fraudulent contractors by requiring home improvement contracts to include a copy of official registration certification from the Department of Consumer Protection.

S *AA Requiring Home Improvement Contractors and Salesmen to Obtain and Display Identification Badges*; SB 207

Cutting Red Tape

Expediting Pre-permitting for Development

When municipalities have identified properties for a particular use, expediting the permitting process can get plans moving forward quickly. Jobs can be filled and projects can be completed in order to realize a town’s vision. This bill establishes a process for municipalities to obtain the expedited review of state permit applications needed in order to develop municipally designated “priority development sites” (PDS) subject to the Department of Economic and Community Development’s approval.

S *AAC Expedited Permitting for Priority Development sites Identified by Municipalities*; SB 485

Investing in Connecticut’s Workers

Raising the Minimum Wage

In another victory for Connecticut’s working families, the legislature approved an increase in the minimum wage. 90,000 Connecticut workers will now receive an increase of over \$4,000 in annual income. This new law will increase the minimum wage in three phases of \$9.15 in January 2015, \$9.60 in January 2016, and finally \$10.10 in January 2017.

AAC Working Families’ Wages; SB 32, PA 14-1

Enhancing Worker Protections

This bill discourages unethical employers from violating wage and hour laws by prohibiting unfair immigration-related retaliation for an individual exercising his rights under Connecticut’s labor statutes. The bill also institutes a ‘double damages’ award in civil actions against employers who fail to pay their employees for earned wages and other compensation. Court costs and reasonable attorney’s fees can also be charged.

S *AAC Retaliation Against Immigrant Workers*; SB 371



Senate & House passed

Senate passed

A Balanced Budget

The Fiscal Year 2015 budget is balanced, keeps budget growth in check at a mere 2.5 percent, applies the surplus to the Rainy Day Fund and doesn't raise taxes. It helps cities and towns hold the line on property taxes, helps seniors remain in their homes, and dramatically expands access to pre-K programs with the new Connecticut Smart Start program and through 1,020 new school readiness slots.

The FY 15 budget adjustments include:

- Provides cities and towns an additional \$7.5 million in education aid over and above this year's \$40 million grant in order to keep local property taxes down
- Delivers cities and towns another \$10 million for the taxes they lose on non-profit hospitals and colleges and another \$10 million for the taxes they lose on state property, also helping to keep local property taxes under control
- Provides \$6.5 million to reopen the elderly renter's rebate program, helping our seniors to remain in their homes
- Provides \$4 million to move individuals with developmental disabilities off of a state waiting list for aid; the focus of the spending is on residential services for adult children whose parents are age 70 and older
- Includes \$43 million for the Board of Regents to fund education programs

AA Making Adjustments To State Expenditures And Revenues For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015; HB 5596, PA 14-47

A Focus on Crime

Student Safety is Paramount

One in five women has been sexually assaulted while in college, and for many, their academic careers are marred by the attack. Connecticut is improving public and private campus sexual assault policies and their responses for students and employees. Funding is also provided to teach bystander intervention and other prevention programs.

AAC Sexual Assault, Stalking and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus; HB 5029, PA 14-11

Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

New legislation will allow victims of certain crimes such as sexual assault and stalking who are not family or household members to be able to obtain a civil protection order or standing criminal protective order. These types of orders were previously restricted to family and household members. Although most victims are targeted by intimate partners or family members, many victims are sexually assaulted by acquaintances or people in positions of authority. These victims had few means of preventing further encounters with perpetrators. These new provisions will provide victims with a meaningful level of safety. In addition, newly passed legislation allows courts to issue financial orders as a part of civil restraining orders for spouses or parents of common children in order to maintain household safety and basic needs such as payment of utility bills, and health or auto insurance.

AA Implementing Provisions of the State Budget for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015; HB 5597, PA 14-217; also, AAC Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; HB 5593, PA 14-234



Senate &
House passed

Senate passed

DUIs and Ignition Interlock Devices

In order to reduce the high recidivism rates associated with drunken driving, this bill will authorize DMV to administratively require ignition interlock devices to be installed on cars of first-time DUI offenders.

AAC *Ignition Interlock Devices*; SB 465, PA 14-228

Improving School Security

In the wake of the tragedy in Newtown, schools are concerned about increasing security measures. The new budget provides \$22 million for schools to harden existing infrastructure, install cameras and buzzer systems and other safety protocols.

AA *Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and Other Purposes*; SB 29, PA 14-98

Eliminating Patent Trolling

Patent trolls threaten lawsuits or collect unwarranted license fees based on their ownership of suspect or overly broad patents, usually in software. Bad actors will often harass small businesses and start-ups about the alleged improper use of a patent, such as the scan-to-e-mail function on a photocopier. This bill creates a new cause of action for targets of patent trolls to sue a company for a bad faith claim.

AAC *Bad Faith Claims or Assertions of Patent Infringement*; SB 258

Protecting “Vulnerable Users” on Public Roads

For years, bicycle commuters and people using wheelchairs have sought secure legal protections if they are injured along our public roads. This bill defines the ‘vulnerable users’ of state highways and public roads to include not only pedestrians and highway workers but also bicyclists and persons using wheelchairs. Anyone who, while operating a motor vehicle, fails to exercise ‘reasonable care’ and causes serious physical injury or death to one of these users would be fined up to \$1,000.

AAC *the Penalty for Causing Harm to A Vulnerable User of A Public Way*; SB 336, PA 14-31

Keeping Illegal Casinos from Our Communities

“Sweepstakes Cafes,” illegal casinos masquerading as legitimate businesses, have been setting up shop in communities around Connecticut, preying on minors and the elderly by claiming to use a loophole in state law in order to run unregulated casinos. Sweepstakes Cafés operate on the edge of the law, and are estimated to profit more than \$10 billion a year in illicit funds. This bill helps close the doors on these predatory gambling dens, before they spread any further into Connecticut communities.

AA *Implementing Provisions of the State Budget for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015*; HB 5597, PA 14-217



Senate & House passed

Senate passed

Helping Our Seniors

Keeping Seniors Safe

It is vital that we protect the safety of Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens, and ensure that everyone who resides here can feel secure in their homes and their neighborhoods. Connecticut will now bolster the efforts of these officials by investigating the threat posed to older adults by sexual predators, and determining an effective method of further ensuring the safety of Connecticut's elder population.

AAC Senior Safety Zones; SB 178, SA 14-20

Training Senior Caregivers

Recent findings suggest that there are over 70,000 individuals age 65 or older living with Alzheimer's or a related dementia. A majority of nursing home residents are suffering from some form of dementia. It is imperative that the employees of the facilities that care for those with dementia are trained and sensitive to the unique needs of this special population. This bill will expand training so that direct care workers and first responders are better prepared to confront the challenges of working with those suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

AAC the Alzheimer's Disease And Dementia Task Force's Recommendations On Training; SB 179, PA 14-194

Helping Seniors Age in Place

Most older adults want to enjoy their golden years living in their own homes. In order to make this more achievable, a growing number of community providers are needed to meet the demand for community and home care. We showed our support for these providers by giving them a 1 percent cost of living adjustment (COLA).

AA Increasing Home Care Provider Rates (included in the FY 15 Budget Adjustment); SB 5596, PA 14-47

Supporting Strong Senior Communities

A "livable community" is one with affordable and appropriate housing, community services, and transportation options for residents of all ages. New legislation requires the Aging Commission to recognize communities that have implemented livable community initiatives. This bill will also help Connecticut make more nutritionally sound meals available to people age 60 and older and their spouses.

AAC Livable Communities and Elderly Nutrition; HB 5227, PA 14-73



Senate & House passed

Senate passed

A Focus on Children & Families

Breaking the Silence Surrounding Child Abuse

Sexual abuse of children is a silent epidemic affecting an estimated three million children in America, and much of that abuse is committed by a relative or other person with whom the child is familiar. Erin's Law, named for Erin Merryn, an Illinois woman who was sexually abused as a child, seeks to empower children to break the silence around sexual abuse. The bill requires the Department of Children and Families to develop a statewide sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program for use by schools.

AAC *a State-Wide Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness Program*; SB 203, PA 14-196

Keeping Children Safe from Smoking

Electronic cigarettes have operated in a gray area that allows their sale to children under the age of 18. This loophole has allowed e-cigarettes to be produced for and marketed to young people to the extent that some companies are selling bubble gum flavored e-cigarettes. This bill makes it illegal to sell e-cigarettes to minors, and for a minor to use them.

AAC *the Governor's Recommendations Regarding Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems And Youth Smoking Prevention*; SB 24, PA 14-76

Saving Young Lives from Cardiac Arrest

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the leading cause of death in young athletes. SCA is frequently the outcome of an underlying heart condition, but can happen to anyone as the result of an impact to the chest, heat stroke, asthma, allergic reaction or medication. The chance of survival for a person suffering from SCA drops by about 10 percent for every minute treatment is delayed. This bill establishes education and training for parents, school staff and students on the signs, symptoms and treatment of SCA so that they may react appropriately and spring into action in a way that could save young lives.

AAC *Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention*; SB 229, PA 14-93

Protecting Young Athletes from Concussions

Concussions are one of the most common injuries that can befall an athlete, and they can have serious, long-lasting consequences. Repeat injuries to the brain lead to greatly increased risk of a lifetime injury. Research has indicated that one of the most effective ways to decrease the likelihood of repeat concussions is for parents and athletes to receive education and training on the risks associated with them and how they should be treated. This bill requires the state Board of Education to develop a concussion education plan and sets certain stipulations regarding student athlete participation in school sports.

AAC *Youth Athletics and Concussions*; SB 5113, PA 14-66



Protecting Our Environment

Preserving Protected Lands

Connecticut's environment is one of the state's greatest treasures, so keeping our public lands and open spaces pristine for all future generations must remain a top priority. This legislation directs the Commissioner of the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to designate department-owned lands as "lands of public use and benefit" for conservation and recreation, and to gradually map these lands in an open, public database. The commissioner may then place conservation or preservation restrictions on these lands to preserve them in perpetuity.

☑ Senate & House passed

☑ Senate passed

☑ *AAC the Grant of Property Interests in Property Held by the Departments of Agriculture and Energy and Environmental Protection and the Establishment of a Public Use and Benefit Land Registry*; SB 70, PA 14-169

Guarding Against Radioactive Fracking Waste

The practice of hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" natural gas wells produces liquid and solid waste with many toxic properties. Research has found the composition of this waste varies widely from well to well, but commonly contains contaminants flushed out from underground, including arsenic, lead, corrosive salts and the highly radioactive radium-226. Suitable sites for fracking do not exist in Connecticut, but may soon open in nearby New York state. This bill establishes a minimum three-year ban on the storage or use of toxic fracking waste in Connecticut until its components can be better studied and appropriate regulations developed.

☑ *AA Prohibiting the Storage or Disposal of Fracking Waste in Connecticut*; SB 237, PA 14-200

Mapping Long Island Sound

The history of Connecticut is synonymous with its maritime tradition, and the Long Island Sound still defines our state, our economy and our culture in a multitude of ways. This bill directs the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection to work with the University of Connecticut to create a fully modern map of the Sound, with a complete inventory of its current uses and natural resources. This map will be used to develop a "Blue Plan" to preserve and protect the Sound over the long term and to guide future efforts near, on and in its waters.

☑ *AAC a Long Island Sound Resource and Use Inventory and a Long Island Sound Blue Plan*; SB 312

Protecting Children from Toxic Lawn Chemicals

During the 20th century it became commonplace to apply large amounts of chemicals to lawns. Yet science has now revealed how truly dangerous this practice is to human health, particularly for young people. Connecticut already bans the application of pesticides and herbicides on K-8 school grounds, and this bill would extend that ban to K-12 schools, parks, playgrounds and other public spaces. Powerful chemical industry lobbyists have resisted this effort, much like big tobacco resisted change only decades ago. These companies have now developed a genetically modified grass seed specifically intended for use with even greater amounts of lawn chemicals. This bill would also ban the unnecessary and dangerous sale or use of these seeds.

☑ *AAC Pesticides on School Grounds, Parks, Playgrounds, Athletic Fields and Municipal Greens and Banning the Sale and Use of Genetically-engineered Lawn or Turf Seeds*; SB 443



Senate & House passed

Senate passed

Honoring Those Who Served

Helping Military Children in School

The children of our men and women in uniform make a great number of their own sacrifices in support of their parents' service. This bill will support those children by ensuring they are granted at least ten days of excused absence from school to visit with their parents as they are called to or returning home from service in a combat zone. The bill also requires that the children keep up with their studies, and complete any assignments missed during their absence.

AAC Excused Absences from School for Children of Service Members; SB 217, PA 14-198

Supporting Veterans in the Workplace

When our veterans return home, they have earned our gratitude for their service and sacrifice. They also deserve the opportunity to put the skills they learned in the military to work, find a job and make their own way in the civilian world. This legislation will remove barriers to entry in the civilian workplace for veterans who learned employable skills while in the service. It will require that state licensing authorities accept military training and experience, where appropriate, as a substitute for additional training, and will allow veterans to gain streamlined occupational certifications.

AAC the Findings of the Military Occupational Specialty Task Force; HB 5299, PA 14-131



☑ Senate & House passed

☑ Senate passed

Ensuring Your Insurance Works for You

Improving Coverage for Diagnosing Breast Cancer

Along with improvements in diagnosing breast cancer, modern technology has allowed for better and earlier detection. In order to improve breast cancer diagnosis, this bill prohibits insurers from imposing a deductible for certain breast ultrasound screenings.

☑ *AAC Copayments for Breast Ultrasound Screenings*; SB 10, PA 14-97

Strengthening Insurance Protections

Long-term care insurance is a popular form of protection for many of our aging constituents. This bill increases transparency for consumers, requiring long-term care insurance providers to provide applicants with full and fair disclosure of policy benefits and limitations. Changes in premium rates, rate schedules and revisions, and explanations of the changes are now required disclosures.

☑ *AA Requiring Certain Disclosures for Long-Term Care Insurance Policies*; SB 9, PA 14-8

Expanding Insurance Coverage

Some medicines need to be administered intravenously in order for the treatment to be most effective. This bill requires certain health insurance policies that cover intravenously administered medications to also cover orally administered medications for the same purposes. Coverage for the orally administered medications must be no less favorable than coverage for the intravenously administered medications.

☑ *AAC Health Insurance Coverage of Orally and Intravenously Administered Medications*; SB 191

Managing Adverse Determinations

There may be times when you need to fill a prescription and the insurance company will not cover the cost for some reason. Currently, there is a certain period of time insurers are given to figure out whether or not coverage can ultimately be given. In the meantime, the prescription can't be filled. This bill changes that, requiring that the prescription be filled until the adverse determination is reconciled.

☑ *AAC Dispensation and Insurance Coverage of a Prescribed Drug During Review of an Adverse Determination or a Final Adverse Determination*; SB 186