

## Listening to Our Veterans

I was proud to author and lead unanimous passage of the Connecticut Women Veterans' Program. The program will reach out to women veterans to improve their awareness of federal and state veterans' benefits and services, do an assessment of their needs, and review programs and initiatives currently available in our state.

I also wrote a new law requiring an examination of ways to make Connecticut's OASIS centers for student veterans more effective. There are about 6,000 veterans enrolled in Connecticut colleges and universities; veterans use the OASIS centers to meet, study, relax and talk and get information on veterans benefits, the GI Bill, tuition waivers, disability benefits and more.



QVCC and ECSU have two of the top-ranked OASIS centers in the country.

The legislature also restored funding in the state budget for Connecticut Honor Guard detachments at veterans' funerals. Funding was increased by \$400,000 over the governor's proposed budget, ensuring representation of the Honor Guard detachments. The state must be committed to honoring the service of our veterans and paying proper respect when they are laid to rest.



## Safer Communities With the Return of Local State Police Dispatch

I fought for the past two years to restore local dispatch to our state police barracks in eastern Connecticut. Consolidated dispatch was a disaster for our region, and I am pleased to report that the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection has reinstated dispatch and call-taking functions at all troops in eastern Connecticut. The result is shorter wait times for emergency and non-emergency calls and greater public safety.



### Your State Senator

# Mae Flexer

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## Enhanced Protections Against Abuse and Neglect of Seniors



This year, I authored a bill granting enhanced protections to seniors to guard against abuse and neglect. The legislation gives abused, neglected, exploited or abandoned seniors the ability to sue perpetrators of these crimes. It also enables victims of financial abuse to protect their assets from those who are taking advantage of them, and requires that financial institutions train their staff to detect potential fraud, exploitation and financial abuse of seniors.

## Transparency and Fairness for Electricity Pricing

Many consumers report being enticed into signing a variable-rate electricity contract with a low "teaser" rate, only to see their bills increase significantly without warning. Customers deserve stable, predictable rates, whether obtained through standard offer service or from competitive offers in the private supplier marketplace. That is why I have fought for the past three years to ban residential variable-rate contracts, and I'm proud that legislation was passed this year to do exactly that. The legislation bans variable-rate residential electric contracts and ensures fixed-rate contracts to provide consumers with stability and security.



## Lower Taxes for Veterans

I led passage of a tax cut for military veterans. Veterans will no longer pay Connecticut income tax on their military retirement pay. State law used to provide for a 50 percent exemption to retired members of the Armed Forces; now there is a 100 percent exemption. Not only is this the right thing to do for those who fought to defend our freedoms, it also helps keep veterans in our state to build our skilled workforce. Many of today's growing businesses are looking to hire highly skilled workers with strong leadership abilities, qualities that most veterans possess.



# STATE SENATOR Mae Flexer

## FIGHTING FOR NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT'S HOSPITALS

Day Kimball and Windham Community Memorial hospitals are both tremendously important to our region as major employers as well as providers of essential health care services. In September, unilateral funding cuts to Connecticut hospitals were announced. I immediately denounced these cuts as misguided and devastating to hospitals in our region. As your state Senator, I will continue to advocate for both hospitals to ensure that critical resources are protected and our communities have access to the best care possible.



### Day Kimball Update

Reps. Rovero and Rosati-Randall and I worked tirelessly to reverse the cuts to Day Kimball. During the December special

session we successfully delivered \$4.4 million in funding to Day Kimball.

As a delegation, we've been focused like a laser beam, making the case all year for why this local, independent hospital is different. Through a frustrating and difficult budget process, we secured the resources Day Kimball Hospital needs to continue to provide vital, high-quality care in our region, and to plan for the future.

### Windham Community Memorial Hospital (WCMH) Update

Months before funding cuts to our hospitals were announced, Hartford HealthCare was rolling out its plans to make drastic changes to critical care services at WCMH, which I also opposed.

I joined with the Windham area legislative delegation, caregivers and advocates at the state Office of Health Care Access (OHCA) to call for greater scrutiny of Hartford HealthCare's planned changes. We also delivered the petitions of more than 3,000 local residents opposed to the plan. Additionally, we appealed OHCA's preliminary approval of the plan and urged them to conduct a public hearing to better understand what these changes in services would mean for our community. Unfortunately, OHCA denied our appeal and has allowed Hartford HealthCare to move forward with this devastating plan. Hartford HealthCare did not deliver on its promise to maintain WCMH as a small, community hospital, and OHCA has failed in its core mission to protect health care in eastern Connecticut. As a delegation, we are committed to reforming the oversight of our health care system to make sure that the voices of our community will actually be heard in future decisions.

The cuts to hospitals also would have also impacted WCMH. Supplemental payments from the state to the hospital, which is owned by Hartford HealthCare, would have been entirely eliminated. State Reps. Susan Johnson, Linda Orange, Gregg Haddad and I delivered \$1.4 million in restored funding to WCMH.



## Supporting Family Caregivers



Nearly 500,000 Connecticut residents act as caregivers, and many of them feel unprepared to provide the care needed to keep their loved ones healthy. I have seen this first-hand in my own family. That's why I led passage of the CARE Act, which will help to ensure that

caregivers are given follow-up care instructions when a patient is discharged from the hospital. It will also reduce costly hospital readmissions.

The CARE Act requires hospitals to:

- Provide patients with the opportunity to designate a caregiver during their admission;
- Make reasonable attempts to notify the designated caregiver if the patient is to be discharged; and
- Provide the caregiver with instructions on how to perform medication management, wound care, injections or other medical tasks when the patient returns home.

## Advocating for Student Sex Assault Victims

I led passage of a new law that extends a successful sexual assault forensic examination program from six acute care hospitals in the state to the University of Connecticut infirmary, thereby providing the victims of a campus sexual assault with quicker, more compassionate care. The SAFE Nurse Act is yet another part of a comprehensive and compassionate approach to campus sexual assault; student victims can now get the help they need in a timelier manner, and law enforcement can quickly begin any criminal investigation. As the senator for over 20,000 college students, I will continue to fight for laws to stop sexual violence on our campuses.



## Easing the Burden of Testing on High School Students



Until this school year, 11th-graders were overburdened with duplicative tests. In addition to taking the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test, many high school juniors also took the SAT, ACT and Advanced Placement Exams. Senate Democrats led bipartisan

passage of legislation to eliminate the requirement that 11th-grade students take the SBAC test and require instead that they take a nationally recognized test such as the SAT at no cost to the students and their families. This not only reduces over-testing, it also provides a free college readiness exam for Connecticut's high school students, making college more accessible to all students.

## Protecting Student Loan Borrowers

This year, Connecticut passed the first in the nation Student Loan Bill of Rights. This law provides additional oversight and regulatory authority over every aspect of the student loan process by requiring the licensing of student loan servicers. Oversight of businesses and individuals who provide these services to lenders will further protect Connecticut students from unfair lending and collection practices. As Vice-Chair of the Higher Education Committee, we also made loan refinancing available to Connecticut residents, students and parents, and expanded access to scholarships. We established greater transparency for financial aid and allowed college students to: pay off student loans early; avoid mounting interest costs; and refinance any existing loans if interest rates drop.

