

PROTECTING SENIORS

Department of Social Services Launches the Accelerated Home Care Approval Pilot Program

Over the summer, the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) launched a pilot program to **help Connecticut's seniors receive prompt approval for home care and avoid costly nursing home or hospital stays.** This program is modeled after Senate Bill 271, a bill I introduced to implement an innovative payment reform that streamlines applications, promotes timely home care accessibility and aims to prevent taxpayer spending on costly institutional care.



From your State Senator

Ted Kennedy, Jr.

For more information about this or any other matter, please contact me at my office:

Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Legislative Aide: Aurora D'Angona

Phone: 860-240-0455 **Toll-free:** 1-800-842-1420

www.SenatorKennedy.cga.ct.gov

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Legislative Update from Ted Kennedy, Jr.

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DEFENDING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Helping to Preserve Long Island Sound

The legislature unanimously approved a measure to **establish the Blue Plan for Long Island Sound, a coordinated strategy for the future use of Long Island Sound.**

The inventory and final plan compiled by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection will be submitted to the General Assembly for its final approval. Once finished, the Blue Plan will provide a detailed inventory of all natural resources, plant and animal habitats, and environmental features along Connecticut's coastline. It will also provide information on the impact that climate change could have on the coast, allowing for more effective preservation strategies in the future.

The legislature also **approved a ban on small plastic pollutants known as "microbeads."** Microbeads are small, non-biodegradable plastic pellets commonly added to many cosmetic products, including facial scrubs, soaps, shampoos and toothpastes. Aquatic life often mistakes the microbeads for food, consuming them, which can bring these plastics and other toxins they absorb into the food chain, even leading to human consumption. The legislation prohibits the sale and manufacture of any personal care product which contains microbeads.



Earth Day Rally at the State Capitol: Senator Kennedy and Senator Tony Hwang stand with Mary-Beth Kaeser, founder of Horizon Wings, a nonprofit raptor rehabilitation organization, and a teenage bald eagle she rescued.

STANDING UP FOR VETERANS

Women Veterans' Program

The legislature unanimously approved and the governor signed into law the creation of the Connecticut Women Veterans' Program, which will require the state Department of Veterans' Affairs to **establish a program that will reach out to women veterans to improve their awareness of federal and state veterans' benefits and services.** The bill also calls for an assessment of women veterans' needs for benefits and services, as well as a review of programs and initiatives currently available to women veterans in our state.

Supporting Veterans on Campus

We passed and the governor signed a bill requiring a study to examine ways to **make Connecticut's OASIS (Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service Members) centers for veterans more effective.** There are about 6,000 veterans enrolled in Connecticut colleges and universities; veterans use the OASIS centers to meet, study, relax, talk and to gather information on federal veterans' benefits, the GI Bill, tuition waivers, disability benefits and more.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS

Transparency and Fairness for Electricity Pricing

Many consumers have reported that they were enticed into signing a variable-rate contract with a low "teaser" rate, only to see their bills increase significantly without warning. Electric customers deserve stable, predictable rates, whether obtained through standard offer service or from competitive offers in the private supplier marketplace.



Public Act 15-90 **bans variable-rate residential electric contracts and ensures fixed-rate contracts** provide consumers with stability and security.

In 2014, the legislature passed a bill which enacted several reforms for the protection of electric consumers. Every residential electric customer's monthly bill must display his or her rate for the coming month beginning in January 2016. **To file a consumer complaint, contact PURA: 1-800-382-4586 or www.ct.gov/pura**

FAMILY HEALTH CARE



Safe Sleep Practices for Infants

Every year, more than a dozen Connecticut children die needlessly due to unsafe sleep practices. With undivided approval, the legislature passed a new law that will **educate**

new parents on the latest safe sleep practices before they take their child home from the hospital.

Public Act 15-39 brings Connecticut in line with recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics by advising parents on safe sleep practices, including: always place babies on their backs for sleep; use a firm sleep surface covered by a fitted sheet; have the baby share the parent's room but not the parent's bed; and keep soft objects, including pillows and loose bedding, out of a baby's sleep area. These simple recommendations can help parents with their newborn and possibly save a child's life.

EDUCATION

Easing the Burden of Testing on High School Students

Many 11th-grade students are overburdened with the numerous standardized tests scheduled for them. In addition to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test, many juniors also take the SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement Exams and class finals all within a window of just over a month.



The General Assembly passed a bipartisan measure 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.

By providing a free college readiness exam for all of Connecticut's high school students, the state is not only saving families money, but also making college more accessible to all of our students.