State Senator Norm Needleman won election in November 2018 to represent the twelve towns in the 33rd District. He also serves as First Selectman of Essex, an office he has held since 2011. Norm brings significant government and business success to both elected offices. In Essex, he has reshaped town government to be a model of effective municipal management, ranking among the municipalities with lowest property tax rates in the state. As a businessman, he founded a pharmaceutical manufacturing company 40 years ago, and has built it to become a leader in its field.

Now in his third term as a State Senator, Norm has taken a leadership role as Senate Chair of the Energy & Technology Committee, most prominently regarding policies focused on the state's energy grid. He led development and passage of two key bills, the “Take Back Our Grid Act” in 2020 and Senate Bill 7, informally described as "Take Back Our Grid 2," in 2023.

Formed and passed in bipartisan fashion after poor utility response to Tropical Storm Isaias, "Take Back Our Grid" implemented performance-based rate adjustments for Connecticut utilities, also introducing penalties for ineffective response to severe weather. Senate Bill 7 expanded upon and advanced consumer-friendly utility regulations including providing ratepayers with a seat at the table for legal matters, prohibiting cost-recovery for advertising, lobbying and other business expenses from the utilities, and shifting closer to a Connecticut energy grid where performance and quality are primary points of interest.

He further has worked to achieve victories in energy and technology that are consumer-friendly and is dedicated to Connecticut’s transition to renewable and clean energy, supporting studies and eased implementation on solar power generation, offshore wind power and fuel cells, among others.

Norm has further supported fiscally responsible budgets without tax increases and forward-thinking policies including paid family and medical leave, strong investment in children’s education and children’s mental health and the development of a debt-free community college program in Connecticut. Norm’s deep knowledge of municipal government and his skill in business planning are central to his role as a State Senator. and he has used this knowledge to help secure millions of dollars of bond funding to support his local communities.

Through his work as State Senator, Norm has received awards and recognition including being named the AARP's Affordable Utilities Champion in 2021 and 2023 and receiving the Connecticut Council of Small Towns' Town Crier Award in recognition of his support for small Connecticut towns in 2022.

As Essex First Selectman, Norm has created an inclusive dialogue among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, focused on effective and efficient delivery of municipal services. His success as a First Selectman is built on long experience in addressing local and regional issues. Prior to being elected First Selectman, Senator Needleman served on Essex’s Board of Selectmen since 2003, the Zoning Board of Appeals from 1997 to 2003 and the Economic Development Commission from 1995 to 2003. He additionally served on the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments, and on the Valley Shore Emergency Communications board, on which public safety professionals handle emergency response and dispatching needs for communities in the region. Needleman is also a board member of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce and a cooperator of Middlesex Hospital.

Senator Needleman’s business career started on a small scale early in life, when he worked at his father’s neighborhood grocery store in Brooklyn. Later, while studying for his college degree in mathematics, Norm drove a taxi in New York City. That experience opened the door to his current business success. During his final week as a taxi driver, he picked up a businessman from Long Island. A lively conversation consumed the ride to the man’s home, and ended with the man offering Norm a job. Six years later that Norm launched his own business, Tower Laboratories. He built the company to pre-eminence in its field, employing more than 150 people at three locations in Connecticut. Senator Needleman’s two sons now share day-to-day management of the company.

Senator Needleman lives in Essex with Jacqueline Hubbard, the Executive Director of the Ivoryton Playhouse. His family also lives in Essex, allowing him plenty of time to spoil his nine grandchildren.