

Child Product Safety



In 2007, the U.S. saw a dramatic increase in recalls of children's products due to high levels of lead. High lead levels can damage nerve connections and cause blood and brain disorders. To address this serious risk, the General Assembly passed legislation to limit the amount of lead in children's products. The bill prohibits the sale of these products and others that contain asbestos, and requires the Department of Consumer Protection to post a list of children's products that are banned hazardous substances. Still further, it ensures that toys taken off the market are not put on the market again.

Comprehensive Reform of State's Criminal Justice System



Keeping our community safe is our most important responsibility. Recent tragedies in our state have uncovered systematic failures that need immediate attention. In the wake of two deadly home invasions in

Cheshire and New Britain, we passed a much tougher version of Connecticut's existing persistent dangerous felony offender law, doubling and tripling jail sentences for the most violent criminals and giving criminal justice professionals additional funding for additional prosecutors, GPS tracking, state police, parolee supervision, warrant service, parole officers, alternative housing and other tools that they have requested. This historic legislation will have an extraordinary impact on our criminal justice system.

Cash Discounts for Gasoline

Recently, the legislature approved a bill that will make it easier for gas stations to provide customers with a discount if they pay cash. The new law, which takes effect immediately, is intended to make it easier for gas stations to offer discounts to customers who use cash instead of credit cards to fill their tanks.

Session Summary 2008

Mortgage Relief

The mortgage crisis has hit many Connecticut families hard. HB 5577 was drafted to offer assistance to these families through the creation of new (HERO and Mortgage Crisis Job Training), and the enhancement of existing (CT Families and EMAP) state programs for mortgage and foreclosure help. It also includes the new foreclosure mediation program that the courts will use to determine if and how families can keep making mortgage payments and avoid foreclosure. The bill creates stricter regulations and greater penalties on lenders and brokers when writing loans for people with limited income and who carry higher debt.



Rep. Perone with the Finance Committee Co-Chair Rep. Cam Staples.

teen driver. In addition, the legislation requires teen drivers to have 40 hours of behind-the-wheel training instead of 20 hours. Plus, to foster greater parental involvement and understanding of the graduated license limitations and penalties, a parent must now attend a 2 hour class with their child. Additionally, the bill increases penalties and suspensions for both violations of the graduated license restrictions and the more serious offenses of excessive speeding, DUI, street-racing and reckless driving. Finally, the bill will enable police officers to confiscate a teen's driver's license for 48 hours for violating any of the graduated license restrictions as well as for excessive speeding, reckless driving and street racing.

Teen Driving

Too often in recent months teen driving accidents have dominated the headlines. In an effort to prevent further accidents and encourage responsible driving, the General Assembly passed Public Act 08-32. This comprehensive legislation makes numerous changes to the teen driver graduated license by extending the passenger restrictions for new drivers from 6 months to 1 year, establishing a curfew of 11 PM for teen drivers, and requiring seat belts to be worn by all passengers in a car operated by a

Identity Theft

To address the dramatic rise in identity theft, the legislature passed a law requiring entities which use social security numbers to destroy personal information prior to its disposal. In addition, firms which collect social security numbers in the regular course of business must create a privacy protection policy which ensures the confidentiality of social security numbers. Persons that violate the provisions of this bill are subject to civil penalties.

Important Updates for Seniors

- **Connecticut Home Care Option Program**
Last session the General Assembly created The Connecticut Home Care Option Program, which allows participants to make deposits into a Home Care Trust Fund account, where interest earned would be exempt from state income tax. This year we expanded that exemption to include Capital Gains and Dividends.
- **Senior Driving Insurance Discount**
Improving on legislation passed last session, this legislation makes it easier for individuals over the age of 60 to be eligible for auto insurance discounts resulting from the completion of a safe driver course. It eliminates the requirement of an in-person final exam for people using an Internet course.

Important Updates for Veterans

- **Tuition Waiver for National Guard Members.** In an effort to assist members of the state National Guard to afford graduate education, the General Assembly extended their undergraduate tuition waiver to include graduate programs at the University of Connecticut and the Connecticut State Universities.
- **Assisting Military Families with Deployment Transition.** To ease transitions for military families experiencing deployment, legislation was passed making military spouses permanently eligible for unemployment compensation when they voluntarily leave their jobs to accompany a spouse who is required to relocate for active-duty service.
- **An Act Concerning Gold Star Family Number Plates.** The bill eliminates the \$10.00 fee for the Gold Star Family license plates. Created last year, immediate relatives of state residents killed in active military duty will be eligible for the honorary plates.

Global Warming



The General Assembly has enacted landmark global warming legislation. The legislation, which I cosponsored, establishes mandatory greenhouse gas emission caps of 10% below 1990 levels that must be attained by 2020 and 80% below 2001 levels by 2050. It examines the level of greenhouse gases in Connecticut and the best way to go about reducing them.