



CONNECTICUT SENATE REPUBLICANS

Finding the Courage to Change **Senate Republican Vision for Connecticut's Future** **2016 Legislative Address**

Delivered via video on February 4, 2016 by Senate Minority Leader Len Fasano

Connecticut is a great state, filled with rich history, tradition and culture. We have an educated workforce that is perhaps the best in the United States. We are perfectly situated between two major U.S. cities giving us the potential to make Connecticut one of the best places to raise a family and start a business.

However, one party Democrat rule has created a state crippled by out-of-control spending, looming deficits, indiscriminate social service cuts, and a total disregard for the people who live in our cities.

The financial instability has led to companies large and small leaving our state.

Yesterday, the governor disclosed a plan for a different course for the state of Connecticut. Certainly we all share the governor's vision for a more prosperous Connecticut: a state of balanced budgets, low unemployment, a safe and reliable transportation system, and a state where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

In order to achieve a more prosperous Connecticut we need to rethink, reshape and retool this state. We can start by concentrating on three major areas.

Number 1: We have to restore financial stability.

The Democrat majority have for far too long budgeted for elections, not generations.

Our obligation is to adopt a sound fiscal plan to restore predictability and stability to our budgets; not only for the current generation, but generations yet unborn.

This plan will ensure that companies like GE and Aetna will once again have the confidence that the state of Connecticut will regain its prominence and be a leader in innovation, job growth and opportunity. This plan includes uplifting our urban areas and taking on tough decisions.

State workers are a valuable resource to our government. However, contracts that were negotiated in a different economic climate in a different economic time need to be revisited. No current state employee should lose pension benefits which they rely upon. However the state needs to shift in the direction of states like Rhode Island, a state that has recognized the challenges of today's economic climate.

This plan includes key points like implementing an enforceable state spending cap, reducing our debt, closing state institutions that cost too much and have failed policies, competitively bidding all state

contracts, and delivering a safe and reliable transportation plan without increasing taxes by 42 billion dollars.

The lack of discipline in the past has left us with huge deficits. Simply this needs to stop.

And clearly, the answer is not abrogating these responsibilities as lawmakers to the governor.

Number 2: We have to restore prosperity in our cities.

The strength of Connecticut depends on the strength of our cities.

No matter where you are born, no matter where you live, everyone should have access to the same opportunities to succeed in life.

Poverty is actually growing and unemployment continues to plague our cities.

Lawmakers often talk about dealing with the effects of problems in our cities. But we need to concentrate on the cause of urban problems.

Many young minority teens in our urban areas believe life ends in their 20s. We need to bring hope so that these same young teens look forward to a career, a family and a long life.

And yes, a second chance is important. But the first chance is critical.

We must break that multi-generational poverty trend.

We achieve these goals by focusing on education, expanding open choice, supporting urban schools, and focusing on good paying job opportunities immediately after high school.

We also need to change how we fund our communities. Often, funds are eaten up by bureaucracy, political favoritism, and inefficiencies. Very little of that money actually gets to the community. We need to change this.

We need to invest funds with community input. It's time we give the power back to the people.

Number 3: We have to restore opportunity for the most vulnerable.

In recent budgets, Democrats have cut funding to those who need it most. We need to put people first.

We need to gradually move people from state assistance to independence.

For example, a single mother who receives full welfare assistance receives roughly thirty thousand dollars a year. It's understandable that individuals on assistance can't afford to leave the system without economic harm to their family. We need to gradually wean families off state assistance by minimizing the pain of the transition to the workforce. For example, we need to keep in place daycare and healthcare as long as possible.

This is a plan where subsidies serve as means to get ahead in life but not as a way of life.

Hope must also extend into the lives of the most at-risk and vulnerable individuals across our state.

For that reason, Republicans are committed to strengthening protections for Connecticut children, reforming the Department of Children & Families, and helping families who care for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. And we must fulfill our commitments to mental health care funding and support for substance abuse treatment. We need to educate our police, our court system and our addiction counselors on forming partnerships to combat the increasing use and overdose of drugs like heroin. Any criminal justice reforms must include wraparound services.

The Connecticut Senate Republicans have proposals to start all these discussions and, most importantly, to refocus our state on prosperity and opportunity for all.

As President Reagan said “The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave.” We need to be courageous, we need to be innovative, and we need to be unafraid.

All Connecticut lawmakers need to find the courage to change the direction of this state because Connecticut's future is at stake.

The state of Connecticut and the voters have had enough. Power and politics is never the answer.

We must follow our hearts and souls, and most importantly, move in unison as one legislative body with one goal in mind: to make Connecticut a stronger state.

Thank you and God bless.