



2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION SUMMARY



The Connecticut Senate Republican Caucus

Kevin Kelly
Senate Republican Leader

Paul Formica
Senate Republican Leader Pro Tempore

NEW STATE LAWS: HEALTH & SAFETY

FIREFIGHTER CANCER RELIEF BENEFITS

Special Act 21-35/Senate Bill 141 An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Cancer Relief Benefits for Firefighters

Support for firefighters diagnosed with cancer acquired from occupational exposure to noxious fumes or poisonous gases.

SUPPORT FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Public Act 21-107/Senate Bill 660 An Act Expanding Workers' Compensation Benefits for Certain Mental or Emotional Impairments Suffered by Health Care Providers in Connection with COVID-19.

Expands eligibility for workers' compensation benefits for post-traumatic stress injuries (PTSI) to cover emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, all Department of Correction (DOC) employees, telecommunicators (i.e. 9-1-1 emergency dispatchers) and--under certain circumstances related to COVID-19--health care providers.

EXPAND TELEHEALTH

Public Act 21-9/House Bill 5596 An Act Concerning Telehealth

Extends the Governor's emergency order to help providers address COVID-19 until June 30, 2023. The bill enables providers like dentists, therapists, physician assistants and behavioral healthcare providers to use telehealth, allows audio-only telehealth services and allows licensed providers from other states to treat Connecticut residents via telehealth.

COMBAT OPIOID ABUSE

Public Act 21-113/House Bill 5597 An Act Concerning Opioids

Establishes a pilot program with a peer navigator and wrap around services in up to five communities to serve individuals with opioid use disorder. Requires the Department of Public Health to establish guidelines for the use of evidence-based, nonpharmaceutical therapies to treat chronic pain.



NEW STATE LAWS: SENIORS

CAMERAS FOR NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

Public Act 21-55/Senate Bill 975 An Act Strengthening the Bill of Rights for Long-Term Care Facility Residents

Strengthens the state's Long-Term Care Bill of Rights for nursing home residents. Allows for virtual monitoring and visitation through the use of cameras and other technology.

MAKE NURSING HOMES SAFER

Public Act 21-185/Senate Bill 1030 An Act Concerning Long-Term Care Facilities

Requires higher staffing levels in nursing homes and requires 2-month supply of protective gear.

COMBAT ELDERLY ABUSE

Public Act 21-122/Senate Bill 763 An Act Requiring Drivers of Paratransit Vehicles to Report Suspected Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation or Abandonment of Elderly Persons.

Makes paratransit vehicle drivers mandatory reporters of suspected abuse of elderly persons.

STRENGTHEN VOICE OF RESIDENTS & FAMILIES

Public Act 21-194/Senate Bill 973 An Act Strengthening the Voice of Residents and Family Councils

Requires input from residents and family councils at long-term care facilities on any state-wide policies affecting living conditions for residents of such facilities.

LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

Public Act 21-150/Senate Bill 1046 An Act Concerning Long-Term Care Insurance

Consumer protection measures on insurers that sell long-term care insurance in Connecticut.

INCREASED PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE

Special Act 21-15/House Bill 6689 An Act Concerning the State Budget

Implements a Republican proposal, reversing a Malloy administration cut, and increases the personal needs allowance from \$60 to \$75, helping seniors in nursing homes pay for personal expenses such as birthday cards, reading materials, telephone expenses, take-out, hobbies etc.

FIGHT AGE DISCRIMINATION

Public Act 21-69/Senate Bill 56 An Act Deterring Age Discrimination in Employment Applications

Prohibits questions regarding age in preliminary employment applications.



NEW STATE LAWS: CHILDREN & FAMILIES

FAIR EDUCATION FUNDING

Special Act 21-15/House Bill 6689 An Act Concerning the State Budget

Rejected Governor's education cuts and instead restored the Republican phase in approach to an education funding formula adopted in the 2017 bipartisan budget with modifications. ECS grant funding is increased by \$45.6 million in FY 2022, and \$91.2 million in FY 2023.

CHILD SAFETY MEASURES FOR ICE CREAM TRUCKS

Public Act 21-20/Senate Bill 608 An Act Concerning the Safety of Children when Buying Ice Cream from a Frozen Dessert Truck; "Tristan's Law"

Improves safety around ice cream trucks following a tragic accident last year.

DENTAL & VISION COVERAGE FOR CHILDREN UP TO AGE 26

Public Act 21-149/Senate Bill 1004 An Act Concerning Dental and Vision Insurance Coverage for Children, Stepchildren and Other Dependent Children.

Allows children and stepchildren to retain dental and vision insurance coverage under their parents' insurance policies until age 26.

EXCLUDE BREAST FEEDING SUPPLIES FROM THE STATE SALES TAX

Special Act 21-15/House Bill 6689 An Act Concerning the State Budget

A tax break for families.

BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR YOUTH CAMPS EMPLOYEES & COACHES

Public Act 21-82/House Bill 6417 Public Act 21-82 An Act Requiring Background Checks for Certain Employees of Youth Camps and Youth Sports Coaches, Trainers and Instructors

A VOICE FOR THOSE WITH AUTISM

Public Act 21-66/House Bill 6320 Public Act 21-66 An Act Concerning the Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council

Adds a greater voice for persons with autism spectrum disorder and their families on an advisory council.



NEW STATE LAWS: PROTECT VICTIMS & FIGHT CRIME

PROTECT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

Public Act 21-78/Senate Bill 1091 "Jennifers' Law"

Expands the definition of domestic violence to include “coercive control.” Aims to protect domestic violence survivors.

COMBAT ONLINE HARASSMENT

Public Act 21-56/Senate Bill 989 An Act Concerning Online Harassment

Expands stalking and harassment laws to include more types of online intimidation.

FIGHT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Public Act 21-81/House Bill 6374 An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses

Prohibits a higher education institution from taking disciplinary action against students for violating the school’s drug or alcohol policy, if they report or are a victim of sexual misconduct.

HELP VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME

Public Act 21-36/House Bill 5677 An Act Concerning the Availability of Community Violence Prevention Services Under Medicaid

Make community violence prevention services a covered service under the Medicaid program, and to provide for training and certification of qualified violence prevention professionals.

SUPPORT POLICE & CRIME VICTIMS

Public Act 21-33/Senate Bill 1093

Gives police officers tools to maintain public safety. Increases penalties for adults who coerce juveniles into committing crimes including stealing cars and allows for search of a person with consent if an officer has reasonable and articulable suspicion of a crime. The bill also will provide victims with notice if a defendant may be eligible for automatic erasure.

INCREASE CYBERSECURITY

Public Act 21-119/Senate Bill 6607 An Act Incentivizing the Adoption of Cybersecurity Standards for Businesses

Allows a business that adopts certain cybersecurity framework and experiences a data breach of personal or restricted information, to plead an affirmative defense. Encourages the adoption of cybersecurity frameworks.



NEW STATE LAWS: ENVIRONMENT

BAN DANGEROUS PFAS CHEMICALS IN FIREFIGHTING FOAM & FOOD PACKAGING

Public Act 21-191/Senate Bill 837 An Act Concerning the use of Perfluoroalkyl or Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in Class B Firefighting Foam

This bill prohibits using class B firefighting foam with intentionally added perfluoroalkyl or polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS). It also prohibits selling or using food packaging with PFAS intentionally introduced during manufacturing or distribution.

ENCOURAGE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRO-ENVIRONMENT ANAEROBIC DIGESTION FACILITIES ON FARMS

Public Act 21-16/House Bill 6503 An Act Concerning the Siting of Anaerobic Digestion Facilities on Farms and the Expanded Use and Establishment of Certain Compost Facilities and Standards.

Encourages timely permitting for anaerobic digesters on farms thereby encouraging the use of farm-based anaerobic digestion of manure which presents an opportunity to increase renewable energy production, improve the economics of Connecticut's agricultural sector, reduce nutrient loading and associated water quality impairments, and advance the efforts to generate cleaner, reliable and more affordable energy for Connecticut.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF SEWAGE SPILLS

Public Act 21-42/ Senate Bill 927 An Act Concerning Revisions to the Sewage Spill Right-to-Know Statute

Requires community leaders and the public to be notified of all sewage spills of a certain size in a timely manner. The bill requires DEEP, by December 1, 2021, to implement a Realtime public notification system that allows the public to choose to be notified of sewage spills or permitted sewage bypasses as they are electronically reported to DEEP. The real-time notifications must occur within two hours after DEEP receives a report about a spill or bypass. The bill also requires DEEP, by February 1, 2022, to begin annually publishing and making publicly available on its website certain summary information about sewage spills in the state.



OTHER MAJOR BILLS

ONLINE GAMING/SPORTS WAGERING

Public Act 21-23/House Bill 6451 An Act Concerning the Authorization, Licensizing and Regulation of Online Casino Gaming, Retail and Online Sports Wagering, Fantasy Contests, Keno and Online Sale of Lottery Tickets

Allows the CT Lottery and Mashantucket Pequot/Mohegan Tribes to accept wagers on sports as well as virtual versions of slots and table games for those age 21 and older, and located in the state. The CT Lottery will also be able to contract with a third-party vendor to operate brick-and-mortar wagering sites.

RECREATIONAL CANNABIS LEGALIZATION

Senate Bill 1201 An Act Concerning Responsible and Equitable Regulation of Adult-Use Cannabis

Possession: Less than 1.5 oz of cannabis will be legal beginning July 1, 2021. Up to 5 oz legal in a locked container at home or in a vehicle if locked in glove compartment or trunk.

Retail Sales: Aim to begin by end of 2022. The sale, manufacture and cultivation (aside from home grow) requires license

Homegrown: Medical marijuana patients can cultivate up to six plants indoors at home beginning October 1, 2021. All adults age 21 and over can grow a similar number at home beginning July 1, 2023. **NO LEGAL WAY TO OBTAIN MARIJUANA JULY 1:** Possession is legal July 1, but retail sales not available yet, home grow not allowed yet, and it's federal crime to transport marijuana over state lines. Therefore, there's no legal way to obtain marijuana in CT July 1 until sales begin in state, even though possession will be legal.

Erases Prior Convictions: Certain cannabis-related convictions that occurred between 1/1/2000 and 10/1/2015 will be automatically erased. Beyond that period will require petitioning.

Where Can You Smoke Cannabis?: Anywhere you can smoke tobacco.



DAMAGING POLICIES WE STOPPED

A NEW GAS TAX

A \$100 million new regressive tax.

A HEALTH INSURANCE TAX

A \$50 million tax on all private health insurance premiums.

A "PUBLIC OPTION" GOVERNMENT-RUN HEALTH PAYMENT PROGRAM

Puts risk on taxpayers, operates without transparency and threatens 50,000 jobs in our insurance industry.

NEW INCOME TAX

A \$500 million "consumption tax" on some residents.

NEW 2% SURCHARGE ON CAPITAL GAINS

A \$260 million new tax targeting job creators.

NEW DIGITAL MEDIA ADVERTISING TAX

Another tax targeting job creators.

STATEWIDE PROPERTY TAX ON HOMES

A new property tax on all homes assessed at \$300,000+

NEW COMMERCIAL PROPERTY TAX

Another burden on struggling job creators.

\$20 TAX ON NON-VOTERS

A fine on residents who chose not to vote in an election.

TOLLS

Something residents have already made clear they oppose.

\$4 BILLION IN NEW TAXES

A massive progressive tax package.

CUTS TO THE MOST VULNERABLE

Stopped proposed cuts to the Medicare Savings Program.



HARMFUL POLICIES DEMOCRATS ADVANCED

“CLEAN SLATE” FOR OFFENDERS

Public Act 21-32/Senate Bill 1019

Erases certain misdemeanors and class D and E felonies if an offender does not commit any other crimes for 7-10 years, depending on their conviction. The original version of the bill passed by Senate Democrats included even more egregious offenses that were stripped out before final passage including strangulation, stalking, and assault of an elderly, blind, disabled, or pregnant person or person with intellectual disability with a firearm. The final bill still clears criminal records for serious crimes including criminally negligent homicide, assault, threatening, causing physical injury with a deadly weapon, reckless endangerment, possession of weapon on school grounds, and criminal violation of a protective order or restraining order. Such records will no longer be available for background checks for jobs or gun permits.

TRUCK TAX

Public Act 21-177/House Bill 6688 An Act Concerning a Highway Use Fee

Creates a mileage tax on trucks in Connecticut. The extra cost to trucking companies and, by extension, Connecticut businesses, will ultimately be passed onto consumers with increased prices on groceries, home heating oil and more.

STATE CONTROL OF LOCAL ZONING DECISIONS

Public Act 21-29/House Bill 6107

Eliminates local control over certain town zoning decisions. Mandates that towns allow single-family homeowners to convert parts of the structure or detached garages into “accessory dwelling units” without the town’s permission. Places limits on how many parking spaces a new home or apartment must have. Allows towns to vote to opt out.

CHILD VACCINE RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION ELIMINATION

Public Act 21-6/House Bill 6423 An Act Concerning Immunizations

Eliminates the religious exemption from the state’s immunization requirement for K-12 students in both public and private schools beginning Sept. 1, 2022. Children in pre-K, day care or those new to the school system can no longer be able to claim the exemption starting that day and must submit a schedule for a vaccination plan. Children who are in kindergarten through 12th grade would still qualify for the remainder of their academic careers.

VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPANSION & LIMITING PARENTAL NOTIFICATION FOR MINOR MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

Public Act 21-46/Senate Bill 2

Expands remote/virtual learning in schools on an ongoing basis even though strongly opposed by teachers. Also places further restrictions on when a parent can be notified by a medical professional that their minor child is receiving mental health or substance abuse treatment.

ELECTION DAY CHANGES

Senate Bill 5 (included in implementer bill Senate Bill 1202)

Allows felons to vote before completion of a sentence; removes towns' ability to conduct May elections placing new burdens on municipalities; mandates employers provide 2 hours of leave to every employee on Election Day, increasing small business costs.

REPUBLICAN PROPOSALS DEMOCRATS DID **NOT** ADVANCE: HEALTH CARE

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL PEOPLE

Senate Bill 1006 An Act Concerning Health Care Costs, The Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange and Health Equity

Senate Republicans proposed plan that reduces health insurance premiums by up to 30%; reins in out of control health care cost growth by employing a benchmarking program the same way Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker has, saving Bay State residents billions of dollars; reduces prescription drug costs; delivers on health equity; and ensures transparency and accountability by requiring audits of the “Cadillac” health plans offered by the state, which are back-stopped by the Connecticut taxpayer.

HOME CARE SUPPORT

Senate Bill 304 An Act Establishing Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility for Certain Home Care Applicants.

FAIRNESS FOR FAMILIES ACT

Senate Bill 307 An Act Requiring Fairness for Families in Medicaid Eligibility and Reimbursement
Encourages home care and protects families from unfair expenses.

LONG TERM CARE AND STOPPING SURPRISE BILLING

Senate Bill 209 An Act Requiring a Review of the Premium Rate Adjustment Process for Long-Term Care Insurance Policies

CORONARY CALCIUM TESTS

Senate Bill 767 An Act Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Medically Necessary Coronary Calcium Scan Tests



REPUBLICAN PROPOSALS DEMOCRATS DID **NOT** ADVANCE: TAX BREAKS & FINANCIAL RELIEF



EXPAND THE SOCIAL SECURITY EXEMPTION

Senate Bill 284

Republicans proposed increasing the amount of exemption of social security income from the state income tax

ELIMINATE THE SALES TAX ON CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

Senate Bill 473

Republicans proposed excluding from sales tax children's clothing and footwear items under \$50

ALLOW MUNICIPALITIES TO EXCLUDE COVID RELATED EXPENSES FROM THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT

Senate Bill 251

Republicans proposed excluding any grants for COVID related expenses from the minimum budget requirement calculation to better assist towns.



REPUBLICAN PROPOSALS DEMOCRATS DID NOT ADVANCE: STOP JUVENILE CAR THEFTS

STOP JUVENILE CAR THEFTS

Senate Bill 529 An Act Concerning Motor Vehicle Thefts Committed by Juveniles

Over the last year, car thefts and burglaries have dramatically increased in our state. Many of these crimes are being committed by juveniles who act without fear of significant legal repercussion. Towns and their law enforcement agencies have asked the state for help addressing the problem.

Currently, both the police and the courts find it nearly impossible to detain or prosecute a juvenile who is caught stealing a car, even for repeat offenders. Such auto thefts are not limited to any given area; they are occurring in cities and towns across our state. Moreover, auto thefts are not limited to property crimes and they lead to even more serious crimes that jeopardize the safety of other drivers, law enforcement and all communities.

CT Republicans have proposed bills that would give law enforcement officers and our courts the tools they need to reduce these crimes.

Senate Bill 529 proposed that a juvenile arrested and charged with a larceny involving a motor vehicle: 1) be placed in detention pending a hearing that shall be held on the next business day following the juvenile's arrest; 2) that the court may issue an order to detain the juvenile in a detention center pending subsequent court hearings and a disposition if the court finds that there is probable cause to believe that the juvenile has committed the acts alleged notwithstanding the additional factors contained in subsection (e) of section 46b-133 of the general statutes; and 3) to require the automatic transfer from the docket for juvenile matters to the regular criminal docket of the Superior Court the case of any juvenile charged with larceny that involves a motor vehicle.

These policies were all rejected by Democrats.



REPUBLICAN PROPOSALS DEMOCRATS DID NOT ADVANCE: JOBS & OPPORTUNITY

FASTR CT (FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION REFORM PLAN)

Senate Bill 595

FASTR CT will invest billions of dollars in transportation, but without tolls, without tax increases and with significantly less borrowing. FASTR CT will create construction jobs, spark economic growth and jump start needed infrastructure investment now. Our plan would create 23,000 good-paying jobs generating nearly \$38 billion in economic activity.

EMPLOY CT

Senate Bill 394 An Act Concerning a Study of Housing Options for Employees

Republicans proposed an Employ CT program focused on increasing housing options for apprentices and other newly hired employees to reside in the municipality where they work.

PIPELINE FOR CT'S FUTURE (TRADES IN SCHOOLS)

Senate Bill 440 An Act Concerning the Pipeline for Connecticut's Future Program

Require the State Department of Education partner with the Office of Apprenticeship Training to develop the Pipeline for Connecticut's Future program as a pathway to obtaining occupational licenses via an apprenticeship or partnership with local businesses.

STATE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Senate Bill 709 An Act Concerning the Connecticut Apprenticeship and Education Committee

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT BOARDS

Senate Bill 550

Empower community members by giving them a voice in how to fund local programs. Promote sustainable community development, lasting job growth and retention, and positive community development.

ALLOW DSS AND OTHER STATE AGENCIES TO ENTER INTO PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Senate Bill 306

Increase the current level of public private partnerships to implement government services.



REPUBLICAN PROPOSALS DEMOCRATS DID NOT ADVANCE: VOTER PROTECTIONS

VOTER PROTECTIONS

- Require Photo ID to vote and establish a fee waiver program for those who cannot afford a governmental ID.
- Require audits of signed statements completed prior to casting a provisional ballot.
- Require the state establish a centralized, real-time, voter registration system, that tracks changes to registration and when each elector cast a vote or applied for an absentee ballot.
- Require municipalities to print a second copy of the tabulator tapes and send to the Secretary of the State with the completed election return totals.
- Require the Secretary of the State to audit, as part of the 5% of selected voting districts, voting districts where the difference in vote tallies is not close enough to trigger an automatic canvass but is within 1% of the automatic canvass threshold.
- Require telephonic or electronic means of generating an AB application have a barcoded voter ID number prominently displayed on the application and work in conjunction with the Connecticut Voter Registration System (CVRS)

