

## House Republican Press Release

June 5, 2008

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### Regular legislative session completed, in-district activities rolling along



The 2008 regular legislative session has wrapped up, and while there is more work to be done, the General Assembly did have its share of significant achievements.

After much debate, the legislature passed S.B. 671, which strengthens our state's persistent dangerous felony laws, which will allow prosecutors to send repeat violent criminals to prison for longer sentences, and also includes \$10 million in funding for various state agencies to fund criminal justice activities.

Funding for public housing and the low and moderate income tax abatement program was also shored-up during this past legislative session. The new law restores \$4 million in rental assistance programs and requires housing operators to refund any rent increases that were erroneously eliminated in the first year of the 2008-09 budget last year.

In the wake of a number of teen driving tragedies, we passed a bill that enacts tougher driving restrictions on 16 and 17-year olds, increases instruction time for prospective drivers, increases the penalties for teenage drivers who carry unauthorized passengers in their vehicles, and increases penalties for those drivers who are charged with racing, reckless driving, speeding and cell phone use.

To honor our veterans, the legislature passed a bill that exempts the \$10 fee that is currently charged for the issuance of the Gold Star Family license plates. The plates are issued to immediate family members of Connecticut state residents who were killed in action while performing military duty in the armed forces. The legislature also voted to allow the issuance of "Support Our Troops!" license plates. Funds raised from the "Support Our Troops!" plate will give supplemental funds to various organizations created to help veterans, active duty service members, and their families.

To assist town at attracting volunteer firefighters, we passed a law that bans municipalities from entering into contracts that would prohibit paid firefighters or paid emergency personnel from serving as active members while volunteering during their personal time for the fire department of the city or town where they reside. Previously, state law did not allow "paid" firefighters in one town or city and also volunteer in their hometown.

Throughout the district, I have been busy during and since the legislative session. At the request of a prison guard union, I toured the Northern Correctional facility in Somers. Northern was originally designed to house death row inmates and other serious offenders only, but it now houses several levels of segregated inmates, gang threat inmates and inmates with mental health issues. The tour was eye-opening and certainly reminded me of the important role that correction officers serve for the Department of Corrections. Our correction officers deserve recognition for the difficult work they do each day.

I was also fortunate to attend the 50th anniversary celebration of the Union Fire Department. The celebration looked back at the history of the Fire Department and recognized several of the past fire chiefs. Union faces challenges because it is a small department, yet charged with providing fire and rescue service to hundreds of acres of state forest. Union Fire Chief Dave Eaton told me that five or six people per year get lost in the state forest.

In May, I organized the first Rx-Express bus visit to the Stafford Town Hall. The mobile Social Services office came to town and offered immediate applications and approvals for a variety of programs, including ConnPace, Husky and Food Stamps. Two women attended who were not on ConnPace and found out they qualified. I am trying to schedule a second bus visit to Somers in October.

Last week, I attended the Eastern Regional Women in Government conference and I was elected to serve my second term as a State Director. Women in Government focuses on improving healthcare for women, and we are now focusing on breast cancer, cervical cancer and heart disease. I will be participating in several local public service announcements urging women to know their numbers, good cholesterol, bad cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

You are probably interested to know what the hottest topics are among residents of the 52nd District. Well, it is probably not a surprise to know that gas and oil prices are a top issue on people's minds. I continue to urge the legislative leaders to reduce the state's portion of the gasoline tax.

I have started a new newsletter and would love to add you to the email distribution list. If you are interested, please email me at [penny.bacchiochi@cga.ct.gov](mailto:penny.bacchiochi@cga.ct.gov). I will be sending out capitol news updates on a regular basis to keep my constituents informed of the goings-on at the Capitol.

*State Rep. Penny Bacchiochi (R-Somers) represents Somers, Stafford and Union in the General Assembly.*