

House Republican Press Release

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GOP PROGRESS REPORT: SPRING IS HERE, STILL NO ENERGY PLAN; HEALTH CARE, EMINENT DOMAIN LAGGING



HARTFORD – Halfway through the legislative session the Democratic-controlled legislature is still no closer to providing any consumer relief from skyrocketing electric bills, Statehouse Republicans including Rep. Vincent Candelora (R-North Branford) said today, and promises to expand health care and curb eminent domain remain unfulfilled.

“With the huge ‘super majority’ the Democrats enjoy, they have squandered the opportunity to do something right away as they promised. Instead, we got more hearings, more promises and no consensus, even within their own caucus,” said House Republican Leader Rep. Lawrence F. Cafero Jr., of Norwalk. He was joined by Senate Republican Leader Louis DeLuca of Woodbury. “Winter has turned to spring and all the Democrats can tell consumers struggling to pay their electric bills is be patient just as they did a year ago.”

He added, “By the time we get around to doing something, if anything, we’ll be putting air conditioners in our windows.” Cafero and DeLuca said the General Assembly could already have cut state taxes on electric bills and enacted cost-saving measures to promote energy conservation because there is widespread support

Instead, halfway through the 156-day session no substantive progress has been made to help residents and businesses meet their electric bills. “On energy issues, the grade is ‘Incomplete.’” Cafero said. “My fear is that over the next few months the final grade will be an ‘F.’”

DeLuca and Cafero noted that after more than a year of hearings and months of legislative wrangling the Energy and Public Utilities Committee completed its work and approved four conflicting major bills without any way to implement them.

“The only thing worse than the arrogance of this majority is its complacency,” said Sen. DeLuca. “There is, regrettably, no sense of urgency on the part of the majority to help ratepayers, let alone enact comprehensive energy reform.”

“Last year, House Speaker Amann promised that Democrats would take up energy reform as their first order of business in January. They didn’t do it. At the same time, the Speaker balked at

Republican proposals we now know would have saved ratepayers more than \$100 million. The bottom-line result of Democratic leadership on this issue: Connecticut pays the highest electric bills in the U.S. We can and must do better.”

On **energy** Republicans have proposed:

- Rolling back the state taxes on electrical rates for six months to save nearly \$100 million;
- Tax savings for those who invest in efficiency heating and cooling systems;
- Incentives to remove large energy users from the electrical grid that most homes and small businesses rely upon.

On **health care**, Republicans note that Democrats campaigned on and promised “universal coverage,” but two huge, competing proposals have been offered by both the House and Senate Democrats that would cost at least \$450 million each but again there is no consensus on how to move forward.

- The Republican health care plan expands access by increasing Medicaid reimbursements. This will give low-income families greater access to doctors while easing the financial burden on troubled hospitals.
- Republicans also favor tax incentives for small businesses to provide coverage and for individuals to buy it.

On **eminent domain**, Republicans more than two years ago proposed limiting government’s ability to seize private property to enrich private developers. So far, nothing has happened and more homes have been taken. The Democrats promised in 2005 that they would change the state laws to address the *Kelo* decision but showed their true colors when they sat by and watched as more homes and businesses were confiscated in the name of “progress,” the Republican leaders said.

To make matters worse, the Democrats scheduled a rare public hearing on eminent domain on March 7, conveniently on a day when both chambers were in session which ensured relatively little public input.

Cafero said that the Democrats, clearly have no intention of taking any significant steps to protect peoples’ homes from the developers’ wrecking ball. Meanwhile at least 30 other states have enacted major legislation since the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the *Kelo* ruling on June 23, 2005 nearly two years ago.

“There is really no excuse for failing to act on these issues after so long,” said Rep. Candelora. “We have to hold the Democrats accountable on their promises, and act immediately for Connecticut residents.”