

## House Republican Press Release

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### Capitol Commentary by State Rep. Mary Ann Carson



#### 2007 Session Moving Forward

The 2007 Legislative Session has reached the halfway point and legislative committees are now reporting many bills out for consideration by other committees or the full State Senate and House of Representatives. I would like to provide updates on several noteworthy bills that are moving through the legislative process.

The Legislature's Environment Committee approved a bill that would expand the state's bottle redemption law to include containers for water, juice and sports drinks. Proponents maintain that it will improve recycling efforts by including containers that were not as prevalent in the marketplace when the state's first bottle bill was enacted into law in the late 1970s. Retailers voiced strong concerns including their ability to handle the sheer volume of returns the bill would require, in particular a provision that would force all establishments to provide the capacity to store a minimum of 70% of returns. It would also require stores to sort and package all returns within seven business days and in turn, require distributors to provide packaging materials free of charge. Senate Bill 1289 now moves to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee for consideration.

The General Law Committee approved legislation that would place limitations on the use of unsolicited automated phone messages, commonly known as 'robo-calls,' by political campaigns. The legislation (Senate Bill 157) would require that any robotic phone message, political or commercial, be preceded by a live spokesperson. In recent years, hotly contested political races have employed the automated calls and the number of calls from competing candidates and supporters appears to escalate with each political cycle. Proponents argue that the legislation represents an important step toward reducing the calls. It now moves to the full House of Representatives for consideration.

The Legislature's Transportation Committee approved Senate Bill 273, which would prohibit open containers of alcoholic in a motor vehicle. Proponents maintain this legislation is needed because state statutes currently send a mixed message to drivers in Connecticut. State agencies and groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving have made commendable efforts to tell motorists that driving under the influence of alcohol will not be tolerated. However, the state still allows drivers to have open containers of

alcohol in their vehicles, something that can clearly produce an intoxicated motorist. SB 273 is now before the Judiciary Committee.

Finally, the Select Committee on Housing unanimously approved legislation that would establish a first-time home buyers program for recent high school and college graduates. House Bill 5490, An Act Establishing A First-Time Homebuyer Savings Pilot Program, represents part of the House Republican Learn Here, Live Here initiative and now moves to the Planning and Development Committee for consideration.

HB 5490 would allow recent high school and college graduates to participate in a first time home buyers program. Those participating in this program would be able to designate that up to 50 percent of their contribution to the state income tax be deposited into a fund for use in the purchase of their first home.

The pilot program would serve a maximum of 500 people per year. If there are more than 500 applicants, there will be a lottery to decide who the participants will be. Each year, 50% of participants will have been high school graduates, and 50% will have been college or university graduates.

I look forward to providing updates on these bills, as well as additional legislation that will be moving forward in the legislative process in the coming weeks.