

House Republican Press Release

May 12, 2008
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Legislature adjourns after somewhat ho-hum session



At midnight on May 7, the General Assembly adjourned its regular legislative session. And, despite the majority party's stated wishes to 'do-nothing' with the state budget, the likelihood of a special session this summer to address the scheduled sunset of the real estate conveyance tax is already being bandied about in Hartford.

That seems a bit odd to me. Why not make the changes during the regular legislative session? After all, the primary purpose of the short session this year was to adopt adjustments to the current budget. It is widely known that the economic downturn reduced the projected revenues for the state, and we must make the necessary adjustments, or face tax increases and/or employee layoffs.

House Republicans responded to the drop-off in revenue by proposing a balanced budget that funds critical programs, cuts taxes, streamlines government, and puts the state on more solid foundation for future years, but the majority party saw to it that the proposal never saw the light of day on the House floor.

It's no longer things like computers, cars, and vacations that are straining budgets of Connecticut families. It's the cost of bare essentials like groceries, gasoline, and electricity. Given the current economic and fiscal climate, it's ironic that this is the first year since the inception of the biennial budget that Democrats refuse to attempt to draft adjustments to the current budget.

Despite the inaction on the budget adjustments, the legislature did get some good things accomplished for the people of Connecticut. Among them was the criminal justice bill we passed to allow a judge to apply stiffer penalties on persistent felony offenders. Although this bill is not a three strikes law (which I support), it is a step in the right direction.

The legislature also passed a bill that exempts the \$10 fee currently charged for the issuance of the Gold Star Family license plates. These plates are issued to immediate family members of Connecticut state residents who were killed in action while performing military duty in the armed forces.

Another bill that was passed allows the issuance of 'Support Our Troops!' commemorative license plates. This was a House Republican proposal to show our

gratitude to the men and women who serve our country in the armed forces. Proceeds from the plate will give supplemental funds to various organizations created to help veterans, active duty service members, and their families.

Towns and cities will also be able to utilize professional firefighters in their volunteer fire departments. The bill passed by the House and Senate effectively 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 municipality where they reside.

Many controversial bills that were passed by the House and Senate will encumber the state budget in the FY '10 and beyond. The state has gone from a projected \$200+ million surplus to a projected deficit in just a few short weeks. Rather than establishing new programs with money that the state does not have, the Legislature should have postponed action on those costly initiatives.

So, there you have it. At least until we are called back in for a special session: Not a pretty picture and not responsible governing.

State Rep. Ruth Fahrback represents the 61st District, including Suffield, and parts of Windsor and East Granby, in the General Assembly.