

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE
State Representative Ruth Fahrbach



Special session ends largely in disappointment

During the special legislative session on June 11, I strongly supported and voted for legislation to give motorists some relief at the gas pumps. However, the legislature should have done more and should have considered an alternative budget proposal.

The legislation that passed on June 11 will help some, especially in these three areas:

- Block a scheduled July 1 increase in gasoline and diesel taxes,
- Allow a cash discount by all gasoline retailers and
- Make low-income people eligible for free, fuel-efficient heating systems.

Stopping the gas tax increase was first proposed on April 28 in an alternative budget co-authored by the House Republicans, and again May 20 in a separate budget proposal. The legislative majority, while agreeing to halt a gas tax increase, failed to adopt other elements in the alternative budget, or even to allow it come up for debate.

While it was nice to see the legislative majority finally come around to the idea of doing something to deal with soaring gas prices, it was disappointing that the majority party did not have the will to do more for the people of our state.

On another issue, I opposed legislation that was adopted to extend for two years a \$35 million real estate conveyance tax on home sales that was scheduled to expire on July 1. As an alternative, House Republicans proposed a plan that would have saved home sellers the \$35 million, but also protected municipalities from losing revenue on which that have come to depend. Although the tax was originally to be a temporary measure, municipal leaders inappropriately continued to include the revenue in their budget to fund current expenses and now do not want to see the tax eliminated.

It is evident to me that this is the wrong time to raise taxes. People are genuinely hurting due to gasoline prices and declining home values. It is irresponsible to add to their misery by increasing state taxes on fuel and on home sales.

House Republicans proposed and supported amendments that would have exempted the following from the extended home sales tax:

- People who are selling their homes at a loss
- Senior citizens who are selling their homes
- Veterans who are selling their homes

In addition to the gas tax and real estate conveyance tax, the legislative majority failed to act on a significant and growing deficit facing the state. Once again, the House Republicans were blocked in attempting to bring up a budget alternative.

The Democrats again voted to not even consider the Republican alternative budget that would have saved \$155 million in payroll through an Early Retirement Incentive Program that restored critical spending cuts:

- \$20 million for the Early Reading Success program for 15 towns and cities;
- \$2 million for added security at battered women shelters;
- \$27 million more struggling nursing homes and other service providers including private providers.
- Elimination of the state's take from the real estate tax without costing towns and cities any loss in revenue.

Special sessions generally do not allow for public hearings or committee meetings and this one did not even allow open and honest discussion on amendments in the House or Senate regarding proposals that would have provided aid to vital programs and ultimately save taxpayers money. The special legislative session was not productive for the citizens of our state, and featured limits on debate on the House floor that I have never seen before in my 28-year legislative career. That is regrettable, if not completely irresponsible, on behalf of the majority party in the legislature and a disservice to the citizens of Connecticut. .

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