

House Republican Press Release

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House Republicans push for flexible state workforce hours; test telecommuting first



HARTFORD – State Rep. Richard Ferrari (R-East Granby) joined House Republicans today in underscoring their support for more flexible work weeks for state employees by promoting their own office plan to allow for telecommuting, a policy that to save taxpayer dollars, make workers more productive and get commuters off clogged highways.

To highlight the telecommuting initiative, House Republican Leader Larry Cafero (R-Norwalk) was joined at a Capitol press conference by other Republican lawmakers from their homes via telephone hook up. In order to implement the policy legislative leaders must agree to offer the telecommuting option, and Republicans are awaiting approval from Democrats on the trial program.

“Years ago during the last gas crisis, The Aetna had discussed the possibility of telecommuting. It wasn’t very successful for a number of reasons. One, we didn’t have personal computers and the dial-up connections were too slow and unreliable. We had security issues since we reviewed paper files that had people’s private medical records in the files,” said Rep. Ferrari. “Today we have more reliable connections, more information is available on the Internet, and we can connect with people with our hard line telephone system. We can also potentially use Internet connections to have closed circuit TV between computers for meetings to avoid excessive travel. We also save time to get to and from meeting sites. It’s time to embrace technology in an effort to ease congestion on our roads and save the taxpayers’ money in the process.”

Other states and at least seven towns and cities in Connecticut have also gone to four-day work weeks to save money which could be another option for the state. Rep. Ferrari said the flexible schedules will not work for all state agencies, but Connecticut needs to be creative.

The pilot telecommuting program Rep. Ferrari hopes to test out over the next few months and evaluated:

- Republican House staff members could telecommute one day per week on a department basis, ensuring that all their legislative responsibilities are covered;
- Staff would use laptop computers that are already available to communicate easily with the Legislative Office Building;
- Because the telecommuting would be staggered throughout the office, no disruption of service for constituents or anyone else who contacts the offices would take place;

- Similar programs have been tried in other states such as Arizona where state workers have **converted 181,000 hours of commuting time into productive working hours and reduced air pollution by 175,000 pounds;**
- A 2007 national study by the Consumer Electronics Association estimated that telecommuting saves enough energy in the traditional workplace to power one million households for a year. The same study determined that **3.9 million telecommuters saved 840 million gallons of gas.**
- *Telecommute Connecticut* estimates that employees who telecommute **save an estimated \$1,200 annually on gasoline.**

Connecticut is one of 13 states that already allows for telecommuting for state workers when it is proved to be “cost effective.” Only 140 state workers participated last year.