

House Republican Press Release

March 12, 2007
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Budget Response



By Lile Gibbons

Although Governor Rell offered a new 2-year budget last month, it is by no means Connecticut's final product. Since January 3rd, we legislators have been convening committee meetings and hearings to hear from our colleagues and the public on how our tax dollars should be spent. Sometime in April the Democrats on the Appropriations Committee will be finishing work on their own budget plan to which the Republicans will respond. The budget process is full of horse trading back and forth with a final product to be worked out hopefully by the close of the session in June.

The Governor has her priorities straight and has a good sense of what's weighing on the minds of Connecticut citizens. Governor Rell's budget addressed difficult issues in education, health care and energy, issues that the Connecticut legislature should at the very least put on the table and debate. The Governor also proposed a ½ percent income tax increase to pay for her initiatives. While I commend the Governor for addressing the issues, an income tax increase is a very difficult sell for me.

Connecticut already spends 14,000 per pupil annually for Hartford students yet the results don't show up in graduation rates. Education in Connecticut needs more accountability, transparency, and choice -- not more tax revenue. For decades, research has overwhelmingly shown money alone does not necessarily reflect nor boost student performance.

Businesses in Connecticut are hemorrhaging from being over taxed. The overall high cost of doing business in the state is discouraging companies from staying in Connecticut or expanding. These businesses, large and small, are Connecticut's engines of job creation and we need to invest in them. This would have a positive effect of retaining our current residents and keeping them from moving to more tax friendly states. The Governor has proposed several initiatives that I believe help in lessening the onus on business such as eliminating the sales tax on electricity for commercial businesses, creating a new

Biofuels Production Tax Credit to encourage companies to both produce and use bio fuels. But we need to do more.

The Governor's budget proposes millions more for health insurance so no newborn leaves the hospital without health insurance. The data from the Office of Health Care Access indicates Connecticut's health problems are more about health access than insurance. Connecticut currently offers one of the best health insurance programs for children and low-income families in the country as well as ConnPACE, our state's prescription drug program for seniors who now can also be covered by Medicare Part D. The legislature and the Governor have all identified low reimbursement rates for physicians, EMT's and emergency room doctors as a major barrier for Medicaid patients receiving adequate health care. When doctors are unable to take on additional Medicaid patients, these patients seek help in our hospitals' emergency rooms, the most expensive care possible. The state, with the aid of federal dollars, should invest more in state and community health care centers, drop in clinics and preventative health measures to increase health access to our underinsured and uninsured.

As the session and the budget process move along, I will be looking hard at both the revenue and the expenditure side of budget proposals. I will fight efforts that reduce the quality of life for all Connecticut residents and businesses — whether they be tax payers or tax recipients. I look forward to working with Governor Rell and the majority party and debating these and other issues as we advance towards a final budget vote.