

House Republican Press Release

July 1, 2008
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Ethics Reform, Safety and Quality of Life Issues Top Legislature's 2008 Agenda



By State Representative Marilyn Giuliano

The 2008 regular and special sessions of the legislature centered on major ethics reforms, and on making Connecticut safer and more affordable for middle class families.

Comprehensive ethics reform was a priority of the 2008 legislature and Connecticut's new ethics law has been called the nation's toughest. It addresses pension revocation, the reporting of bribes, campaign solicitations by chiefs of staff and ethics training requirements.

This new law allows state courts to revoke or reduce the pensions of both elected officials and state or municipal employees who have been convicted on corruption charges. It creates a class A misdemeanor for any public official who fails to report a bribe or knowledge of a bribe. It prohibits legislative or executive branch chiefs of staff from soliciting campaign contributions, and creates ethics training requirements for public servants.

To protect the safety of children and families, a new law takes a stronger stance in dealing with repeat violent offenders, particularly those convicted of the crime of home invasion.

Prosecution as a persistent dangerous felony offender can be initiated if that individual has prior convictions of certain serious crimes, e.g., rape, murder, arson. This act sets minimum penalties for persistent dangerous felony offenders.

Protecting new young drivers who are more likely to become involved in serious accidents also was high on the legislature's priority list.

Legislation establishes several new requirements for 16- and 17-year-olds, and in some cases their parents or legal guardians, both before and after they get their drivers' licenses. It further restricts the passengers they may carry while being instructed under a learner's permit. Beginning at 11 p.m., 16- or 17-year-olds cannot drive except for employment, religious, or school-related purposes.

For anyone issued a learner's permit on or after August 1, 2008, the new law increases from 20 to 40 hours the amount of behind-the-wheel, on-the-road training a 16- or 17-year-old must get before qualifying for licensure.

For 16- or 17-year-olds issued learners' permits on or after August 1, 2008, the law requires a parent or guardian to attend two hours of instruction on teen driving laws and related issues with the child before the teen can take the license test.

For people in danger of losing their homes due to mortgage foreclosure, the legislature addressed the current mortgage crisis by specifically authorizing the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to continue the CT FAMILIES refinancing program and implement mortgage refinancing and emergency mortgage assistance programs. This new law requires the chief court administrator to establish a foreclosure mediation program in each judicial district to run through 2010.

For the state's preeminent teaching hospital, the UCONN Health Center, the legislature provided \$25 million to close a budget gap and set up a process to address the hospital's future.

Like many academic health centers throughout the United States, the UCONN Health Center has a deteriorating infrastructure, and increasingly slim financial margins from its clinical care operations to support medical education and research. Acting upon an independent needs based analysis and review by the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering commissioned by the legislature, the health center and one or more regional hospitals must develop a mutual vision for establishing affiliation agreements, and for delineating collaborative working relationships to support excellence in medical education.

Please call me a 1-800-842-1423, if I can provide information on these or any other state-related concerns.

Marilyn Giuliano is state representative for the 23rd Assembly district of Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook and Westbrook in the state house of Representatives. She is the ranking member on the legislature's Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement.