

## House Republican Press Release

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### New Laws Will Help Patients, Veterans, Motorists



*By Marilyn Giuliano*

With the beginning of the 2009 New Year, Connecticut residents now benefit from a number of new state laws taking effect protect and assist terminally ill patients, people with autism, and drivers seeking repairs covered by auto insurance.

Allow me to highlight some that particularly affect individual citizens and families who have special needs.

Connecticut citizens who require end-of-life care but have exhausted their personal finances can be covered under the state-federal Medicaid program. Previously, the state provided Medicaid-funded health care services at home or in nursing homes, but not all hospice-type benefits. This new benefit expands the range of options for families and individuals in the throes of terminal illness.

Health insurers will now be required to cover physical, speech and occupational therapies for autism spectrum disorders if a person's insurance policy covers the same treatment for other conditions.

Connecticut motorists will be able to buy two new special license plates for \$60. With the purchase of a "Support Our Troops" plate, \$45 of the fee will benefit the nonprofit Connecticut Support Our Troops, Inc., which helps soldiers, their families and veterans.

The second plate benefits the Connecticut Nursing Foundation, with \$45 of the fee earmarked to raise awareness of the profession and provide nursing education scholarships.

A new law prohibits an auto insurer and appraiser from requiring that a motorist use a specific repair shop. Notices now must be posted in vehicle repair shops on appraisals and estimates, and on auto insurance identification cards informing customers they have a right to choose their own licensed garage to fix their vehicles. A repair shop that participates in an insurance company's repair program cannot fix a vehicle under the program unless the insured driver acknowledges in writing of the right to choose another garage.

Highlights of others laws that took effect January 1, 2009:

Requires primary care doctors to perform annual screening for blood lead levels in children between 9 and 35 months

Extends health insurance coverage of dependent children from age 22 to 25

Requires that laborers on any public works project complete a federally approved construction safety and health course

Requires the state Consumer Protection Commissioner to adopt uniform dating regulations of retail goods to help the merchant determine how long to display the product for sale. The exceptions are dairy products, which are already covered by state law.

Expands mental health insurance benefits by eliminating a three-day hospital stay prerequisite for treatment in residential facility

If you have questions on these or other state issues, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 1-800-842-1423.

State Rep. Marilyn Giuliano serves the 23<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District of Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook and coastal Westbrook in the state House of Representatives.