

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Hamzy: Cash-Strapped Towns & Cities would Get Badly-Needed Relief under House GOP Proposals



***Unfunded Mandate Prohibition; In-School Suspension Delay
Would Ease Pressure on Municipal Treasuries***

Cash-strapped towns and cities like Bristol and Plymouth struggling to provide critical services at a time when municipal revenues are declining could receive badly-needed relief if the state legislature enacts several measures supported by House Republican legislators, state Representative William A. Hamzy said today.

Representative Hamzy, R-78th District, discussed the Republican proposals after a budget roundtable Tuesday at the State Capitol involving chief elected officials from several small-to-medium sized Connecticut cities and towns. The forum was intended to solicit information and suggestions from the local officials on how the state legislature can assist communities struggling to provide critical services during the current recession.

“Mayors and first selectmen from throughout Connecticut know they won’t be getting more financial aid from the state this year because of the recession and the budget deficit - and some may even be receiving less,” Representative Hamzy said. “For that reason, most chief elected officials want more flexibility on how they can spend the state funds they do receive so they can get the biggest bang for their bucks. They also want relief from unfunded state mandates, which force towns to offer certain services, but give them no financial assistance to help defray the cost of providing them. Unfunded mandates are a major reason why local property taxes are as high as they are in Connecticut.”

“As a legislator who has been working to eliminate unfunded mandates for years to lower the burden on local property taxpayers, I was pleased to be one of the original sponsors of a bill to require new unfunded mandate proposals to pass by a two-thirds vote of the state House of Representatives and the state Senate before they can become law. If our proposal passes, it will make it extremely difficult for the General Assembly to foist new mandates on our towns and our overburdened property taxpayers.”

The roundtable discussion, which included a a budget briefing and an outline of Connecticut’s fiscal problems and how they could affect towns and cities from the state legislature’s nonpartisan Office of Fiscal Analysis, was hosted by House Republican Leader Lawrence F. Cafero Jr., R-Norwalk.

In addition to the unfunded mandates proposal (House Bill 5285) House Republicans also are supporting several other proposals to provide fiscal relief to towns and cities. The bills would:

- Delay the implementation of a new in-school suspension requirement until July 1, 2012 (H. B. 5705).
- Delay from January 1, 2010, to July 1, 2012, the implementation of a requirement increasing the maximum age for juvenile court jurisdiction for youths charged with certain criminal offenses (H. B. 5237).
- Allow towns and cities to post legal notices on their municipal websites (H. B. 5214). The bill would not preclude municipalities from placing legal notices in local newspapers as well.
- Delay the implementation of a new state mandate that requires towns and cities to post certain information (such as minutes of meetings of local boards and commissions) on municipal web sites until on or after July 1, 2012 (H. B. 5218).

The bills were introduced by Representative Hamzy, Representative Cafero and state Representative Themis Klarides, R-114th District.