

House Republican Press Release

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Representative Harkins: New Laws Take Effect October 1



Hartford, CT—State Rep. John Harkins, R-Stratford, today reminded Stratford residents that a number of new laws that take effect on Sunday, October 1.

Public Act 06-187 will help protect the interests of senior citizens by requiring companies providing homemaker or companion services to obtain a certificate of registration from the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP). It also gives DCP authority to suspend, revoke, refuse to issue the registration or take other disciplinary measures in response to violations of the law.

Under the new law, these agencies must require new employees to undergo comprehensive background checks and take specified factors into account when making employment decisions based on the checks. Homecare agencies must also provide their clients with written individualized contracts or service plans that identify the scope, type, frequency, and duration of services to be provided. In addition, agencies that enter into a contract with a client's family must detail exact compensation.

“We must protect families from unscrupulous individuals that may cause harm to our loved ones, especially those who are vulnerable and cannot help themselves,” said Rep. Harkins. “This law enacts important consumer protection measures in this regard.”

Public Act 06-95 bans alcohol vaporization devices, which are machines that process products containing alcoholic liquor with oxygen or another gas to produce a vaporized product for human inhalation. The new law subjects violators who sell, purchase or possess the devices to imprisonment for up to six months, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both.

“Unfortunately, alcohol vaporization devices are popular in certain parts of Europe and cities in this country,” said Rep. Harkins. “They facilitate a very dangerous method of alcohol consumption that has resulted in serious health problems and even deaths. The new law represents a proactive approach to preventing such problems in our state.”

Public Act 06-50 prohibits email “phishing,” which is typically a scam that uses email “spam” or pop-up messages to deceive people into disclosing their credit card numbers, bank account information, Social Security number, passwords, or other sensitive information. The new law specifically makes any violation a Class D felony.

Also, Public Act 06-60, which was cosponsored by Rep. Harkins, outlaws small scanners and reencoders that can be used to create fake credit cards. This is an ever increasing problem throughout the country and the bill is a positive step towards protecting our residents. Penalties for violating the new law include up to 10 years imprisonment, fines of up to \$10,000 or both.

“While modern technology largely benefits consumers and businesses, it also provides opportunities for thieves,” added Rep. Harkins. “I continue to hear concerns from constituents regarding Identity Theft. Likewise, thieves use stolen logos from reputable businesses to fool people who believe they are genuine inquires. The new laws give state law enforcement a means to prosecute those who engage these crimes.”

Finally, Public Act 06-81 tightens pollution notice requirements by requiring sellers of homes who are or will be served by well water to notify prospective buyers of the water test results for volatile organic compounds.

By law, home sellers must disclose to prospective purchasers information concerning certain environmental matters, such as the presence of lead and radon. The new law requires the sellers of homes that are or will be served by well water to also disclose the results of any water test for volatile organic compounds. It also requires the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to notify state, federal, labor, and employer representatives about contaminated sites.

In addition, PA 06-81 requires the DEP to take certain steps if it orders the testing of a private drinking well and the test finds a contaminant level that exceeds the maximum contaminant level applicable to public water supply systems for any contaminant listed in the public health code or state drinking water action level list.

“People should not have to worry about whether their water is safe for consumption,” said Rep. Harkins. “This law will help ensure that prospective buyers of a home will have safe, potable water to consume.”