

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

REP. HETHERINGTON APPLAUDS GOVERNOR SIGNING “FACE OF CONNECTICUT” OPEN SPACE BILL



HARTFORD – State Representative John Hetherington, R- 125th District, New Canaan and Wilton co-sponsored a bill that Governor M. Jodi Rell signed into law to protect the health and economic well-being of Connecticut's communities by assisting our municipalities in restoring and preserving the natural, agricultural and historic resources that constitute the face of Connecticut.

Rep. Hetherington said, “Connecticut has long history of protected its’ natural treasures. This law helps preserve and protect our resources for future generations. Here is an example of the legislature and the Governor working together for the good of the state.”

The legislation, HB 7275, increases grant ceilings for, and makes adjustments to, the Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Grant Program. It also creates a loan program to help municipalities purchase agricultural land. By law, grants under the Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Grant Program are capped at certain percentages of a desired property’s fair market value. The act increases those percentages. And also increases, from 2% to 5%, the percentage of grant funds that the Department of Environmental Protection may use for certain administrative expenses related to the program.

The law requires the agriculture commissioner to administer a program that provides eligible municipalities with loans to purchase agricultural land. Under the act, the loan term cannot exceed five years and is not subject to interest.

The act establishes the Municipal Purchasing of Agricultural Land Account as a separate, non-lapsing account within the General Fund. The agriculture commissioner must use the account funds to provide municipalities interest-free agricultural land acquisition loans. It authorizes the agriculture commissioner to adopt regulations that establish the criteria for the agricultural land acquisition loans and the terms governing the loans.

The new law took effect July 1, 2007.

Representative Hetherington co-sponsored the legislation, which passed the state House in a unanimous 144-0 vote and the Senate by a 36-0 vote.