

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

Generally Speaking....



By State Representative John J. Ryan

Summer is unofficially over, and rumor has it that we will be in Special Session sometime next week (since the bonding implementer bill still has not yet been done this year !) and hopefully it will only be a short September session in Hartford!

Our recent columns have focused on the legislative committees that I have the pleasure of serving on, and the last one that we have to touch upon is the General Law Committee. As a long-time reader you will recall that much earlier in my General Assembly career, I served as the Ranking Member of this Committee, and I have stayed on as a member. General Law has one of the more interesting areas of legislative jurisdiction, since the entire consumer protection field is but part of its “turf”. Long-standing General Law issues are always, varieties of licenses and permits, regulation of alcohol and CUTPA (the Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act) and a wide scope of animated issues, and this year was no different!

So if you remember the “medical marijuana bill” (which you already know I voted against and Gov. Rell vetoed when it passed the General Assembly) and you guessed that it went through General Law, you are correct. You might not know however, that SB-157, concerning “prohibiting ‘robo’ calls”, [don’t you really enjoy these endless recorded messages?] a bill that I co-sponsored, was a bill that originated in General Law and after an extensive public hearing, we unanimously passed out of the committee on March 14, and the bill was later approved by the Judiciary Committee. Unfortunately, it was never called for a vote in the Senate.

Are you concerned that a young person under 18 could obtain a “body piercing kit” and attempt some unsupervised do-it-yourself piercing? General Law heard and [again unanimously] passed a bill, HB-7200 on this topic, but it was never called in the House! Do you think that our new car “lemon law” already on the books, could use some improving? We heard and voted out HB-1059 to hopefully speed up the arbitration process in those cases, but this also did not get passed out of the Senate. Have you heard of “organized retail theft”, meaning large-scale, coordinated shoplifting-for-resale operations? General Law heard and passed SB-1306 to invent new criminal penalties for this problem, and this bill actually got through the committee process and was passed by the Senate, but on the last day of the Session, and never was acted upon by the House, so

like the others, maybe next year? (You might be getting the notion that the legislature is not exactly the best organized place to work - - another “joy” of being in the minority!) Of course, every committee has topics that are with us year after year after year; you may recall that the” cell phone/driving ban” (the most ignored law by citizens that is “on the books”!) was a good example of this phenomenon. Sometimes a topic needs years to get enough momentum to get through the system and finally become law. The issue of gasoline “zone pricing”, a hot topic in the last election with several candidates committing “to get something done “if elected, is hardly a new topic to the General Law Committee! You already know that I voted several times in the House this year for amendments to **create** a summer gas tax holiday (killed every time by the majority), but you might not know that the General Law Committee took up a zone pricing ban bill again this year, HB-1136. And if you have been heeding my entreaty to **PLEASE LEARN TO LOOK IT UP YOURSELF** at www.cga.ct.gov, you will note that there were several bills filed on this proposed topic, which has gotten a great deal of media attention in our area. While there is a great deal of dispute among industry experts on the positive/negative effect on gasoline zone pricing, I voted for the bill in General Law for a variety of reasons: 1] it was early in the legislative year and I thought it a good idea to have some bill “alive” to serve as a basis for further action or amendment, 2] Gov. Rell was interested in doing something on this topic, and 3] certainly the issue was important to our region and deserved some further debate/attention/discussion . Well, guess what? Despite all the campaign/political “noise” about this issue, HB 1136 did not come close to getting favorably voted out of the Committee – like we say, you can look up the vote on March 14. I have no doubt the topic will be around next year, and next.....

There were, and always are, many more issues in the very lively General Law Committee, but I hope that this gives you the idea. And I hope that you enjoyed your summer!

As always please feel free to contact me with your concerns and issues. As your state representative, it is my job, and my priority to represent you and to make sure that your needs and concerns are addressed at the capitol. You can write to me at Room 4200, Legislative Office Building, and Hartford, CT 06106-1591, send me e-mail at John.Ryan@housegop.ct.gov or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.