

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

Sawyer: \$50,000 for Safe Havens Awareness Planned



HARTFORD- Representative Pam Sawyer (R-Bolton) today announced that \$50,000 for outreach, promoting the Safe Havens program under the Department of Children and Families which was included in last year's budget package is now being utilized. Representative Sawyer had introduced the legislation providing this money during last year's session of the General

Assembly.

The funds will be used to produce and air three radio commercials on a variety of radio stations across the state to promote the program.

The Safe Haven program, which was sponsored by Representative Sawyer, was enacted in 2000 by the Connecticut General Assembly. It was created to encourage young distressed women to bring their infant babies to hospital rooms rather than abandon them, where they may not be found until too late. Under this law, the parent may voluntarily give up the baby when it is up to 30 days old, to the staff of an emergency room. The parent will not be charged for abandonment. This allows the parent freedom from prosecution, and enables the child to be placed for adoption. The parents' privacy is protected, and they are not asked their names.

"We need to constantly remind people that this service is out there," said Representative Sawyer. "Young mothers need to know that there is somewhere to turn, and that the desperate act of abandonment can ruin two lives. This law protects the mother and the child."

Governor M. Jodi Rell, who has lent her voice to one of the radio ads, agreed. "If we can raise awareness of the Safe Havens law, we may be preventing one of the worst things we can imagine: the needless death of a precious newborn baby," Governor Rell said. "We can never be sure how a young parent learns of the law. So we have to take advantage of every opportunity to inform him or her that they have a safe alternative to abandoning a baby."

The ads are being run in both English and Spanish.