

House Republican Press Release

July 16, 2008
Press Office: 860-240-8700

House Republicans push for flexible state workforce hours; test telecommuting first



HARTFORD – State Rep. Pamela Sawyer (R-Bolton) joined House Republicans today in underscoring their support for more flexible work weeks for state employees by promoting their own office plan to allow for telecommuting, a policy that to save taxpayer dollars, make workers more productive and get commuters off clogged highways.

To highlight the telecommuting initiative, House Republican Leader Larry Cafero (R-Norwalk) was joined at a Capitol press conference by a Republican lawmaker and a staff member from their homes via telephone hook up. In order to implement the policy legislative leaders must agree to offer the telecommuting option, and Republicans are awaiting approval from Democrats on the trial program.

“The time has come for this pilot program to be implemented as a means of seeing what we can do as a state government, particularly the legislative branch, to ease congestion on our roads and reduce our usage and burden with regard to gasoline,” said Rep. Sawyer. “We have talked about freeing up our roadways and reducing air pollution for years, now it’s. to take some action on the issue.”

Other states and at least seven towns and cities including Andover in the 55th District within Connecticut have gone to four-day work weeks to save money which could be another option for the state. The flexible schedules will not work for all state agencies, but Connecticut needs to be creative.

The pilot telecommuting program Rep. Sawyer hopes to test out over the next few months and evaluated:

- * Republican House staff members could telecommute one day per week on a department basis, ensuring that all their legislative responsibilities are covered;
- * Staff would use laptop computers that are already available to communicate easily with the Legislative Office Building;
- * Because the telecommuting would be staggered throughout the office, no disruption of service for constituents or anyone else who contacts the offices would take place;

* Similar programs have been tried in other states such as Arizona where state workers have converted 181,000 hours of commuting time into productive working hours and reduced air pollution by 175,000 pounds;

A 2007 national study by the Consumer Electronics Association estimated that telecommuting saves enough energy in the traditional workplace to power one million households for a year. The same study determined that 3.9 million telecommuters saved 840 million gallons of gas.

Telecommute Connecticut estimates that employees who telecommute save an estimated \$1,200 annually on gasoline. Connecticut is one of 13 states that already allows for telecommuting for state workers when it is proved to be “cost effective.” Only 140 state workers participated last year.