

House Republican Press Release

January 15, 2009
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Pam Sawyer Proposes Mandate Relief to Help Small Towns and Local Property Taxpayers



HARTFORD – State Rep. Pam Sawyer, R-Bolton, today proposed an amendment to deficit reduction legislation that would ease state-mandated costs imposed on local communities and thereby ease some of the burden on local property taxpayers.

Connecticut House Republicans raised a series of proposals during House debate to trim the state’s current year deficit, now estimated as high as \$800 million, including a proposal to help towns which also are in tight fiscal straits.

“Having had requests from town leader to find mandate relief, we want to take the first steps to crack into unfunded mandates, now,” said Rep. Sawyer. “Our towns have been saying consistently that they need to have mandates lifted, and lifted soon before town budget deliberations are finished. They need these tools now. Town are on thin economic ice and we have heard the cracking.”

Rep. Sawyer said, “Simply put, towns are getting desperate and we need to act quickly.”

Rep. Sawyer’s amendment would take numerous steps to ease or postpone costs on towns:

- Require a two-thirds vote of the legislature to create or enlarge any state mandate on local governments
- Allow the state Department of Administrative Services to coordinate groups of towns to purchase services jointly, such as snow plowing, lawn mowing or painting
- Postpone until 2012 new requirements for in-school suspensions
- Postpone until 2012 new two-day requirements for posting minutes and meeting schedules of town boards and commissions on town websites, as many towns do not have fulltime webmasters
- Allow local government legal notices to be posted on the Internet and not just in newspapers, to save money each week
- Postpone until 2012 raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 16 to 18 years of age, which will require costly training of local police and separate juvenile holding and monitoring facilities—saving up to \$95 million.

The proposals were defeated by the House majority, though they could arise again later in legislation during the 2009 session.

House Republicans also voted to reduce the state's mounting deficit by \$185 million.

Republican lawmakers also offered to cut their own pay by 5 percent, delay an \$87-million union contract until a total budget is in place, and provide relief to towns and cities struggling to put their own budgets in place, but were rebuffed by Democrats.

The Republicans proposed:

- Cutting their own pay by 5 percent
- Delay an \$87 million salary increase package for corrections officers until a budget is in place
- Restoring \$54 million in cuts Democrats eliminated from Gov. Rell's budget
- Delay or eliminate local mandates such as costly in-school suspension and treat juvenile offenders as adults which police departments support.

Rep. Sawyer serves the 55th Assembly District of Andover, Bolton, Hebron and Marlborough in the state House of Representatives.