

## House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

### 2007 General Assembly Session Underway



On January 3, the Connecticut General Assembly convened its 2007 Legislative Session. The day also featured the inauguration of Governor M. Jodi Rell and the state's other constitutional officers, who were all sworn into four-year terms. It marked the first time in more than 40 years, that the Governor did not address the Legislature on the opening day of the new session.

Governor Rell instead chose to give a speech after taking the oath of office, which spoke in general terms. The governor is expected to introduce formal proposals from her agenda in February.

As you may know, our State Legislature is on a two-year cycle. This session will end June 6. The odd and even year session of the General Assembly have different timetables. During an odd-numbered or 'long-session' year, the Legislature meets from January to June. In even year, or 'short-session' years, we meet from February to May. During a "long session" year, all topics are open for potential legislative action. During a short session, however, legislators are limited to only introducing bills that have a fiscal impact. During early January, legislative committees spend considerable time organizing. During the next few weeks, we will begin drafting bills.

On January 3, the House of Representatives adopted rules on the operation of the new legislative session. I supported several proposed changes to these rules proposed from the House Republican Caucus. One change would have required a three-quarter majority vote to raise taxes and full public hearings on any proposed tax hikes. Currently, only a simple majority vote is necessary to raise taxes and there are no requirements regarding holding a public hearing prior to such votes.

Another proposal would have banned late night sessions without a two-thirds vote of the chamber. In the past, many votes on the most controversial bills—and tax hikes in particular—have come after the majority of state residents have gone to bed and the deadlines for daily press reporters have passed. Also, policy decisions are best not made during the wee hours of the morning. Adopting this rule change would ultimately bring additional transparency to the government process.

One additional change that would have protected taxpayers involved requiring both chambers of the legislature to adopt all collective bargaining agreements. Currently, agreements can go into effect without a vote. By not taking an up or down vote, the

legislature is essentially abdicating control over a large percentage of the state budget. One should also be aware that bargaining contracts amount to roughly 28 percent of the \$16 billion budget or more than \$4 billion annually.

Unfortunately, despite the obvious merit of these proposals they were all rejected in party-line votes.

Finally, I will note that I was appointed to serve on several legislative committees during the 2007-2008 legislative sessions, including the position of Ranking Member of the Public Health Committee. The minority caucuses of the State Senate and House of Representatives each appoint a Ranking Member to legislative committees, which serve as the Caucus' leader on issues before that committee. I served as Ranking Member of the Public Health Committee from 2003 to 2005 and served as an Assistant Minority Leader during my most recent term.

The Public Health Committee is one of the busiest in the Legislature and legislation that originates there impacts so many lives across throughout the State of Connecticut. I very much look forward to returning to a leadership role on the committee to work toward ensuring quality health care for our residents. I also am pleased to have been appointed to serve as an Assistant Minority Leader during this term as well.

I will also serve on the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee and the Program, Review and Investigations Committee. The finance committee crafts legislation to establish Connecticut's tax codes. It has jurisdiction over all matters relating to finance, revenue, capital bonding, fees and taxation. Meanwhile the, Program Review and Investigations Committee serves as the General Assembly's "watchdog" over the executive branch of the State government. According to state statutes, it is charged with the duty of examining state government programs and their administration to ascertain whether such programs are effective, continue to serve their intended purposes, are conducted in an efficient and effective manner, or require modification or elimination.

*P.S. I'd like to thank my husband, Doug, and dear friends, Cathy and Bill McNulty for joining me as I was sworn in for the fifth time in my legislative career. Most of all, I thank you for your continued support and I look forward to hearing from you and working with you on behalf of our wonderful communities and on behalf of the citizens of State of Connecticut. God bless you and have a wonderful New Year.*