

House Republican Press Release

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Legislation Taking Effect This Month



Capitol Commentary *By State Rep. Mary Ann Carson*

A number of new laws took effect on July 1. The following are details of several of these laws, with information courtesy of the non-partisan Office of Legislative Research (OLR).

Public Act 08-160 postpones the implementation date of a 2007 law that generally prohibits out-of-school suspensions and extends, from five to 10 days, the maximum length of in-school suspensions until July 2009. The act provides that in-school suspensions may be served in any school building under a school board's jurisdiction. It also requires the education commissioner, by October 1, 2008, to issue guidelines to help boards determine whether a pupil should receive an in-school or out-of-school suspension.

Since the original law was approved in 2007, with its initial July 1, 2008 implementation date, local officials have expressed concerns over this legislation, particularly the additional cost associated with hiring staff to monitor students serving their suspensions on school property. The 1-year implementation delay is designed to allow the Legislature additional time to further refine the initiative.

The act also expands the definition of bullying and requires school boards to implement the bullying policies the law requires them to adopt. Finally, it requires people in a teacher preparation program to be encouraged to complete a school bullying and suicide prevention component and requires teachers to receive in-service training in bullying prevention. Boards of education that implement an evidence-based model approach to bullying do not have to provide the training.

Public Act 08-169 impacts magnet schools throughout the state. The legislation is a response to the latest Sheff v. O'Neil settlement agreement that expands the entities that may establish and operate interdistrict, "Sheff" magnet schools to include those run by public and private colleges and universities and nonprofit corporations approved by the education commissioner.

Public Act 08-176 addresses the current mortgage crisis by specifically authorizing the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to continue the CT FAMILIES

refinancing program and implement mortgage refinancing and emergency mortgage assistance programs (EMAP). The new law allows CHFA to develop and implement a program for it to purchase foreclosed Connecticut property and turn it into supportive and affordable housing. It also requires the chief court administrator to establish a foreclosure mediation program in each judicial district to run through 2010. The act establishes several requirements for mortgage loans and for mortgage professionals making those loans and makes additional regulatory changes, including increasing bond requirements for lenders and brokers.

Finally, Public Act 08-87 impacts state benefits for Veterans. The law modifies the eligibility criteria for admission to the Veterans' Home. It links veterans' admission eligibility to federal criteria and also extends eligibility to resident armed forces members and former members entitled to retirement pay under a specified federal law. It also extends eligibility for burial in the state veterans' cemeteries to these members and former members.

Editors Note: State Representative Mary Ann Carson represents Kent, New Fairfield, New Milford and Sherman in the Connecticut General Assembly.