

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

**ON THE WATERFRONT**



*By State Representative John J. Ryan*

Editor's note: We inveigled Rep. John Ryan to depart from his usual State Capitol topics this week to focus instead on a local issue, the recent flooding problems. Ryan protested that any comments made by him would be viewed as either "Monday morning quarterbacking" or political grandstanding at election time; we retorted that his favorite football team isn't so hot this fall, and that he and the State legislature are not on the ballot this year, so tough. We also told him not to (as would be his wont) get into Marlon Brando or Elia Kazan references, so having asserted our editorial supremacy, here goes:

JF: What's the State's role in our local flooding mess?

JJR : You are starting off with what is really a two-part item : A) Obviously I will be glad to help with attempting to get any State funding that could be available, or technical assistance, once and if the Town decides what it wants to do. Clearly Governor Rell moved quickly on the FEMA funds possibility! B) Is much tougher...I am not yet certain, if, or how the State itself has contributed in anyway to the flooding causes, e.g. has recent work on I-95 made flooding worse ? I don't have answers yet on these items, but I am trying to get some.

JF: We have noticed that you have a wide variety of contacts in the community; what are you hearing?

JJR: I think I have had more calls, discussions, e/m, etc. on this topic than on any in recent memory, and if you want me to report what I have been getting as input, the many comments are nearly all the same: the problem is in several different parts of town, not just one location, it is steadily getting much worse, there were not many of these problems until recently, etc. Also everyone has expressed considerable impatience that very little has been done to address the problems.

JF: What constructive comments have you received?

JJR: Quite a few actually; several people asked why the Town did not send trucks around the days immediately after the flooding to help clear and pick up damaged possessions, one fellow who lost his pickup truck wanted to know if he can get a replacement dump

sticker instead of having to buy a new one, several people have asked why trees or other debris blocking the streams have not been cleared..... I have told these and others that they sounded like good comments to me and they should follow-up with the Town ASAP.

JF: What advice are you giving people?

JJR : Inasmuch as the overwhelming sentiment seems to be that the Town is moving slowly on this, I am telling people to take photos and document the situation on their property, their street, their neighborhood; further, since so many people are complaining to me (rightly or wrongly) that storm drains have not been routinely cleaned, that they should get together with their neighbors, keep track of when they are cleaned, and 'adopt' the storm drains on their street and monitor them in heavy rains, clear leaves, etc. If you don't have a street or neighborhood association, start one, collect all your data and recommendations, get together with other street or neighborhood groups, and pick out the effective RTM members or other officials, meet with them ASAP, present your positions, get recommendations together and make this a priority for the elected officials to do something in the immediate future.

JF: You were on the RTM for years, you were the Norwalk Corporation Counsel before that...so give me some remedies here!

JJR: So how many folks are you trying to get mad at me in one column? If it were up to me, I would get started on identifying steps that can be taken NOW. There is a very large amount of anecdotal evidence out there now from effected residents; have a process in place NOW to collect it, review it, and do the easiest fixes first. I would have a very small working group empowered (there are actually some people who seem to know what they are talking about on these topics, some EPC members, for example ) to get this material assembled, review whatever existing studies or reports that are already "on file" and have recommendations and priorities in 30 days. Some recommendations may only fix 5 or 10 % of the problem, but that's a start, and might save some residents and businesses \$1,000s next time this happens, and it certainly is going to happen again!

JF: So what else? That's all?

JJR: Not hardly. There is a wealth of talent in this Town...did you notice who the Governor tapped to do a review of DOT, for example? If it were up to me, I would be leaning on high-powered private sector folks to get some loaned instant analysis going here, together with some expert folks in State agencies or some of our distinguished educational institutions, and at least get some direction or suggestions here. As a client of "Atty. Ryan" said the other day, to paraphrase: "Are we the only place that has ever had some flooding? How many dozens of centuries ago did the Romans invent hydraulic engineering and start building aqueducts? You're telling me that the best this Town can do is spend money on more studies?" I was able to prevent him from morphing into Peter Finch's character from "Network" and start screaming that he was mad as Hell, but

his viewpoint is overwhelmingly the sentiment that I have heard from people. Maybe the Darien Times should start a “suggestion line” on flooding fixes?

As always please feel free to contact me with your concerns and issues. As your state representative, it is my job, and my priority to represent you and to make sure that your needs and concerns are addressed at the capitol. You can write to me at Room 4200, Legislative Office Building, and Hartford, CT 06106-1591, send me e-mail at [John.Ryan@housegop.ct.gov](mailto:John.Ryan@housegop.ct.gov) or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.