



CRCOG Weekly Legislative Report

2019 Legislative Session

January 24, 2019

Weekly Legislative Feature Issues:

After the first full week of the legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly has gotten to work quickly. In a flurry of activity, the legislative committees have been holding meetings in which the first inkling of their respective agendas have begun to become clear. The committees have also begun reserving bills for public hearings, which will be begun in the coming weeks.

In a unique development, the General Assembly convened for a legislative session in which it took action on an emergency certified bill aimed at addressing the extreme position that its estimated 1500 federal employee-citizens have been put in due to the partial federal government shutdown that has lasted more than a month. The bill was passed in the House with 127-15 votes and the Senate with 32-1 votes.

While an overview of the bill is discussed below, it also provided a property tax deferral program that authorizes municipalities and municipal subdivisions to establish a program to defer the due dates for an affected employee's real and personal property or motor vehicle taxes, water, or sewer rates, charges or assessment payments. This authorization would allow a municipality's legislative body to vote to establish such a program. In addition, it establishes eligibility criteria under the bill, prohibits accrual and collection of interest on the affected individual's taxes, rates, charges or assessments, that became due during the period the individual is eligible for such program.

Additionally, the bill makes clear that deferred taxes, rates, charges or assessments are subject to the existing statutory provisions concerning (1) property tax lien continuance, recording, and releasing and (2) tax precedence and enforcement. This provision does not apply to tax, rate, charge or assessment due before December 22, 2018 or after the date on which the individual is no longer eligible for the program.

This past week has revealed new developments of particular interest to you:

Legislature Approves Loans for Unpaid Federal Workers

After over a month since the partial federal government shutdown, the Connecticut's House and Senate unanimously passed a bill that would enable the estimated 1,500 federal employees to take out loans. The bill passed in the House with 127-15 votes with 44 out of 59 Republicans. In the Senate the bill passed with 32-1 votes with the lone opposition from Sen. Rob Sampson of Wolcott. Shortly after the vote, Gov. Lamont signed the bipartisan bill that would financially help people across Connecticut during this federal budget impasse.

This bill is a result of a partnership between private and public entities. The loans would be backed by banks and credit unions that volunteered for this initiative, most notably Webster Bank, whose CEO, John R. Ciulla, has been working with the Governor on the outline of the program. Ciulla indicates that there will most likely be more institutions to be involved in the program. The terms of the loan program are:

- Eligible federal employees can apply for up to three loans
- Each will equal a worker's monthly salary, "not to exceed \$5000-minus any unemployment compensation.
- The state will guarantee up to 10% of the loans to be interest free for at least 270 days after the shutdown ends.

According to the Office of Fiscal Analysis, an estimated \$21.1 million will be issued for the program. With the state's 10% no interest guarantee the exposure is \$2.1 million. Analysts predict that since the national loan delinquency rate is 2.28%, the state should spend less than \$500,000 due to repayment defaults.

The bill will also authorize municipalities to establish tax-deferment programs for affected employees. Town councils, such as West Hartford's, acknowledge the importance of this authority given that residents' inability to pay their financial obligations could result in a domino effect on land, buildings, and water and sewage.

As for opposition of the bill, legislators, mainly Republicans, argue that this is a federal issue and that the state is choosing to only help a small group of struggling employees in the state. Some pressed that there are larger issues in the state that must be prioritized over the federal government shutdown. House Minority Leader, Themis Klarides (R-Derby), argued that while there are other pressing issues in the state, the people affected are still residents of the state that are unfortunately affected by this complicated mess in Washington.

[CT Mirror- Legislature Approves Loans for Unpaid Federal Workers](#)

Concepcion Named Director of Hartford Business Chamber

State representative and former city councilman was appointed as the executive director for the Hartford Chamber of Commerce. Given Concepcion's previous position as the "vice president of Hartford partnerships for the MetroHartford Alliance," its current president and CEO, David Griggs reports his assurance that Julio will be the right man for the job. The goal to reinvigorate Hartford's businesses is right along Julio's alley and his apparent energy and passion for the city will give him the additional push to help business owners and neighborhoods flourish.

The MetroHartford Alliance was formed in 2001 after MetroHartford merged with MetroHartford Economic Growth Council. MetroHartford's plan to resuscitate the chamber of commerce includes a plan to use research and data to sell the city to companies and industries to move into the area.

One of his first initiatives to move towards reinvigorating the chamber of commerce is to tour and meet business owners especially small business owners.

[Hartford Courant- Concepcion Named Director of Hartford Business Chamber](#)

Breaking the Ice: Lamont Made Direct Calls to Multitude of Mayors During First Storm as Governor

As Connecticut endured its first winter storm Saturday into Sunday, municipal leaders around the state received personal phone calls from Connecticut's new leader, Governor Lamont. Mark Boughton, Mayor of Danbury said "It was a positive first impression for the Democrat's nascent administration and storm response." He remarked that he had "never had that before from the governor."

Governor Lamont made calls to 10 mayors and first selectmen during the storm, based on the cities and towns with the most power outages being reported to the state's Emergency Operations Center. These municipalities included New Haven, Waterbury, Middletown, Hamden, New London, Newtown, Bethel, Monroe, and Granby.

Mayor Dan Drew of Middletown received a call while he was shoveling his own driveway. He commented that "it's always helpful to have direct access during an emergency."

Former governor Lowell Weicker remembered the time when Governor Meskill took a skiing trip in the early 70s, which left him stranded after the region and Connecticut was crippled by an ice storm. Weicker remarked that the "new governor is off to a strong start."

[Hartford Courant: Breaking the Ice: Lamont Made Direct Calls to Multitude of Mayors During First Storm as Governor](#)

Tracked Bills:

There are 300 proposed bills that relate to CRCOG interests, which includes issues such as crumbling foundations and education cost-sharing. Proposed bills are just an idea that has been introduced by an individual or group of members of the House or Senate as opposed to a bill introduced by the chairs or a committee. We will be sure to keep you apprised as these issues develop further.