



CRCOG Weekly Legislative Report

2019 Legislative Session

January 31, 2019

Weekly Legislative Feature Issues:

It has been a busy week in Hartford with committees continuing to work on drafting bills. Additionally, they have started scheduling public hearings, which will begin next week.

In a recent development, Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney submitted a proposed bill aimed at revamping the state's property tax system. The legislation has several components, including:

- A one-mill statewide tax on real estate.
- Repeal of the local property tax on vehicles with a new statewide vehicular tax of between 15 and 19 mills, and revenue going into a fund for reimbursing towns and cities that host tax-free institutions such as colleges, state buildings, and hospitals.
- Increase special education and public school grants.
- \$25,000 personal property tax exemption for businesses.
- A \$50,000 tax exemption for one-to four-family, owner-occupied residences.

Senator Looney argued that the proposed statewide 1 mill tax on real property would generate enough revenue to return to the towns and cities enhanced education funding as well as reimbursement for the loss of local revenue for hosting the tax-exempt properties.

Senate Minority Leader Len Fasano recalled a similar effort to give Hartford homeowners a break in taxes ended after associated higher taxes on businesses forced jobs to leave the city. He argued that Looney's proposal might discourage business development in Connecticut again.

Additionally, Governor Lamont recently announced that his administration was considering extending the sales tax to include groceries, medications and other long-exempt items.

Chris McClure, spokesman for the Office of Policy and Management stated that "[i]n order to build a better budget—one that will attempt to provide the much-needed stability for economic growth through the next two years and through the next decade—we need to explore new and different options. This means leaving no stone unturned and engaging in all necessary conversations so we can evaluate and analyze ways to achieve and retain balance."

This announcement drew immediate criticism, most notably from Governor Lamont's own political base. The Lamont Administration responded by noting that this was just an option that they were exploring and had not developed into a proposal at this time. We will be sure to keep you updated as further details emerge.

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

Proposals to Force Regionalized School Districts Spark Debate, Distress

The Education Committee meeting on January 28th, 2019 was supposed to focus on “concepts” for future bills, but instead focused on two bill proposals that would force regionalization of school districts across Connecticut. There has already been pushback. Representatives like Gail Lavielle, R-Wilton, have already begun voicing the “distress” of their constituents, stating the “[the community doesn’t] feel that someone far way should be telling them what to do with their children...” On the other hand, representatives like Michelle Cook, D-Torrington, are arguing that if “regionalism is what we have to do to make education in the state of Connecticut work, then we need to figure out how to make that work.”

Senator Martin Looney, the creator of Senate Bill 454—a bill that would force municipalities with populations fewer than 40,000 to consolidate with neighboring districts—believes the current number of small districts is not fiscally sustainable. Similarly, Senate Bill 457—a bill that would require any district with a student population of fewer than 2,000 to merge with a new or existing regional school district—aims to address shrinking student populations across the state. Many newly-elected Democrats have already expressed their concern for the bill, including Sen. Will Haskell, Sen. Alex Bergstein, and Rep. Lucy Dathan, who wrote in an open letter that any attempt to find efficiency in our school systems should be done with “the participation and consent of the municipality.”

Betsy Gara, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns, expressed concern that regionalization may not be fiscally efficient for all municipalities in the first place, as Looney assumes. Rep. Susan Johnson, a Democrat from Windham, says she favors regionalization of schools as an attempt to address education inequity across the state. Despite the controversy, Rep. Bobby Sanchez, co-chairman of the Education Committee, says he’s “going to leave everything on the table at this point because I’m a true believer in discussion.” As Sen. Looney states: “...the issue of local control... will absolutely and necessarily be controversial, but it’s important to begin the discussion.”

[CTMirror: Proposals to force regionalized school districts spark debate, distress](#)

State Rep. Brandon McGee says he’s ‘leaning’ toward running for mayor of Hartford

State Representative Brandon McGee could be running for mayor of Hartford. Rumors began to circulate when banners, which McGee claims he had nothing to do with, were hung on street corners and near city hall. When asked, McGee confessed he is “seriously considering [his] run.” McGee is the current representative for the 5th House District, which represents the Windsor/Hartford area, and is a co-chair of the General Assembly’s housing committee.

McGee would be running against incumbent Luke Bronin. Bronin cites such successes in his tenure as: persuading unions to make concessions, helping to stabilize city finances through development projects

and a state bailout, and getting the construction of a major league ballpark on track. Critics of Bronin say that he has not paid enough attention to Hartford's neighborhoods. McGee believes neighborhoods will play an important role in the next election cycle.

A few candidates have already announced their plans to run for mayor. These include: Craig Stallings, the current chairman of the Hartford Board of Education; J. Stan McCauley; and Aaron Lewis. There is speculation that former Mayor Eddie Perez may run, due to his recent attendance at public events.

Update: On January 28th, McGee announced that he is running for Mayor of Hartford.

[Hartford Courant: State Rep. Brandon McGee says he's 'leaning' toward running for mayor of Hartford](#)

CT Foundation Solutions Indemnity Company will Start Writing Checks to Homeowners This Week

The captive insurance company responsible for supporting homeowners with failing foundations will begin writing checks this week. (1/27-2/1).

Mike Maglaras, the Connecticut Foundation Solutions Indemnity Company superintendent reported that "homeowners with valid and active type 2 claims for foundation reimbursements, whose claims have become active within this fiscal year, will start receiving deposits on their total reimbursements."

He added that CFSIC is paying out the reimbursements within 45 days for homes whose foundations have already been in place. This accounts for 25 homeowners during this funding cycle. He noted that the decision to start with type 2 claimants was because the work on the foundation has already been done and the documentation is straightforward.

CFSIC and ESIS (the claim adjustment vendor) are still working on the type 1 claim applications, which are from homeowners looking to repair their crumbling foundations in the near future.

Insurance companies have refused to pay such claims with the average cost of foundation replacement around \$185,000 with a range between \$150,000 to more than \$350,000. The CFSIC will pay a maximum of \$175,000 to an individual with each claim being reviewed and dispersed on a case-by-case basis.

[Hartford Courant: CT Foundation Solutions Indemnity Company will Start Writing Checks to Homeowners This Week](#)

Four candidates vie for Senate's 5th district seat

As of January 26th, four candidates have announced their run for Connecticut Senate's 5th district seat. The need for an election arose after Beth Bye, who originally won re-election, decided to instead spend her time leading the Office of Early Childhood. The election will take place on February 26th.

The Democrats have endorsed Derek Slap, who has represented the 19th House District since 2016. Slap is known for recently signing legislation protecting interviewees from having to disclose their salary history and for signing legislation creating an independent consumer advocate for Metropolitan District customers. Republicans have endorsed Bill Wadsworth, a former state representative and former town councilor for Farmington.

Running with the Independent party is Jeff Przech, an English teacher and registered Libertarian. West Hartford Democrat Mark Stewart Greenstein has petitioned onto the ballot, running with the Amigo Constitution Liberty Party.

[Hartford Courant: Four candidates vie for Senate's 5th district seat](#)

Tracked Bills:

There are more than 300 proposed bills that relate to CRCOG interests, which include 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.