



## CRCOG Weekly Legislative Report

### 2019 Legislative Session

March 28, 2019

#### Weekly Legislative Feature Issues:

As more legislative committee final deadlines pass, the pace at the Capitol has slowed, but not stopped. The Appropriations Committee continued its workgroup work and the General Assembly convened on Wednesday, March 27 for a legislative session.

#### Legislative Session:

On Wednesday, March 27, 2019, the Connecticut state senate voted overwhelmingly to confirm David Lehman as the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development after a two-month debate on whether his history as a Goldman Sachs partner during the 2008 financial collapse should disqualify him from public service.

**The final vote in the Senate was 28-8, which saw three Democrats joining five Republicans in opposing the confirmation.** The Republicans voting no were Senators Rob Sampson of Wolcott, Kevin Kelly of Stratford, John Kissel of Enfield, and Heather Somers of Groton. The Democrats who joined the Republicans were Senators Mary Abrams of Meriden, Mae Flexer of Killingly and Matt Lesser of Middletown.

Governor Lamont said that "today's vote was a critical step towards our aggressive commitment to growing Connecticut's economy- through strategic policies and programs in support of all facets of our diverse economy."

Sen. Marilyn Moore, D-Bridgeport, said she was convinced to support Lehman by business executives Lehman visited in Bridgeport at her invitation, saying he displayed a strong understating of development challenges in the state's largest city.

Sen. Rob Sampson, a Republican from Wolcott, was the only senator to speak in opposition to Lehman's confirmation. He said that his objection was based on a disagreement with Governor Lamont's approach to economic development. He argued that Lamont's approach was very much like corporate welfare.

In the House, Speaker Aresimowicz and Rep. Simmons were supportive of Lehman despite having no role in the Senate's confirmation vote. Two former corporate CEOs and Board Chairs, Indra Nooyi of PepsiCo and Jim Smith of Webster bank issued a joint statement praising the confirmation noting that Lehman's confirmation "sends a strong message to businesses large and small, to start-ups, and to entrepreneurs who want to make our state their home: This is a new day."

## **Questions on the Validity of Transportation Committee's Tolls Votes**

On Tuesday, Rep. Vincent Candelora, R-North Branford, raised an interesting objection to the recent approval of three bills out of the Transportation Committee that would allow the Department of Transportation to implement Connecticut highway tolls. He argued that with the recent assignment of Sen. Derek Slap to the Transportation Committee, ten senators currently sit on the committee, which violates the joint legislative rules. Those rules limit the committee to a maximum of nine senators. As such, Candelora argued that he would challenge the validity of the three toll bills that were recently voted out of the Transportation Committee.

Senate President Pro Temp. Martin Looney was skeptical noting that there were ten senators on the committee last year and nobody objected at the time. Moreover, he argued that he and Senate Republican leader Len Fasano agree, this would not impact the final result. Luckily for toll supporters, the Connecticut legislature operates under Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure. This means that once a bill has been passed by the House or Senate, any procedural mistakes are voided and ignored, but the bill has to pass for that rule to apply. Even if Candelora gets his way on this procedural issue, he acknowledges that the toll bills could still come through the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee. We will be sure to keep you updated as this matter continues to develop.

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

### **Lamont Shifts on Tolls, Schools Signal Collaborative Style, Steep Learning Curve**

In his little-more-than-two months in office, Governor Ned Lamont has already tackled issues of tolls, gambling, casinos, sports betting, marijuana, and school district consolidation. So far, Lamont has received criticism for shifting his position on an all-vehicle tolling plan after being elected. Although some see his behavior as "deceptive," others a positive sign that Lamont is willing to listen. Last week, after backlash from municipalities across the state, Lamont shifted his stance on school regionalization by clarifying that school districts only need to "consider" ways to collaborate rather than be "forced to." Although hesitant to compare leadership styles, Colleen Flanagan Johnson—a senior advisor to Lamont—conceded that Lamont and former Governor Dan Malloy are "two different people" and that there's a "learning curve" to governing. Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff praised Lamont's openness to collaboration. Senate Minority Leader Len Fasano urged the governor to give a bit more direction to legislators in his role.

[CT Post: Lamont Shifts on Tolls, Schools Signal Collaborative Style, Steep Learning Curve](#)

### **Gov. Ned Lamont Unaccustomed to Hawking Bonds**

Lamont is back in Connecticut after visiting Chicago on Thursday to market general obligation bonds to investors. "I didn't really know that was part of my job," Lamont said. "I'm still sort of figuring this out." According to the state treasurer's office, the state is expected to sell \$850 million of general obligations bonds during the last week of March.

[Hartford Courant: Gov. Ned Lamont Unaccustomed to Hawking Bonds](#)

### **Lamont Nominates Bryan Hurlburt as Agriculture Commissioner**

Bryan Hurlburt, a former Democratic state legislator, was nominated Monday by Governor Ned Lamont as the state commissioner of agriculture. He is currently the executive director of the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, an organization that markets agriculture and advocates for the state's farming industry. Formerly, he served as executive director of the Connecticut office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency after an appointment from Barack Obama. He also worked at Wholesome Wave, a Bridgeport-based non-profit that provides affordable fresh food to underserved communities.

His appointment is subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. If this nomination is confirmed, that will leave the newly-elected Lamont with only commissioners of education and social services left to appoint.

[CT Mirror: Lamont Nominates Bryan Hurlburt as Agriculture Commissioner](#)

### **Insurance Department Investigating Cancellation of Homeowners with Failing Foundations Insurance Policies**

The Connecticut Insurance Department has opened investigations into at least two cases of insurance carriers cancelling homeowners' insurance policies due to the existence of crumbling foundations. This developed after two victims came forward with notices in the last month that their homeowner's insurance policies were cancelled. These cancellations were in violation of a state directive that bars insurers from cancelling policies based on existence of a falling foundation. In 2015, the Insurance Department directed all insurers to take no action to "cancel or non-renew an affected homeowner's insurance coverage as a result of a foundation found to be crumbling or otherwise deteriorating."

One of the victims, Lisa Centola of Ashford, said that when she received the non-renewal notice, [she] "was just in a rage." Her anger and frustration is why she filed a complaint with the state. Insurance Department investigators notified her that the letter had been sent in error.

CID Commissioner designate Mais said that "under no circumstances is a carrier writing homeowners or condominium insurance in Connecticut allowed to non-renew or cancel a policy as a result of a foundation found to be crumbling or deteriorating." He then asked that any homeowners receiving an illegal cancellation notice file a complaint with the Insurance Department.

[Hartford Courant: Insurance Department Investigating Cancellation of Homeowners with Failing Foundations Insurance Policies](#)

### **Tracked Bills:**

**Please see attached document.**

