



CRCOG Weekly Legislative Report

2019 Legislative Session

May 9, 2019

Weekly Legislative Feature Issues:

The Connecticut General Assembly convened throughout the week to take action on a number of bills. One controversial bill in particular captured the limelight in a building where controversial bills are often debated with little fanfare--[HB No. 5004: AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE](#), as amended by House Amendment Schedule A, [LCO No. 8234](#).

This bill was called by the House for debate at 10:00 PM on Wednesday, May 8th with House Republicans vowing to talk until the sunrises. After more than 14 hours of debate on the bill, the House voted 85-59 with 6 members absent/not voting to pass this bill out of the House. This was a party-line vote with Democrats supporting the bill and Republicans opposing it. Representative Boyd was the only Democrat to vote no on this bill. By the time the House adjourned at 12:18 PM on Thursday, May 9th, they had been in session for just over 24 hours.

The bill as amended:

- Increases Connecticut's minimum wage from \$10.10 to \$15 over four-and-a-half years.
 - This consists of 5 raises, none exceeding \$1.
 - \$10.10- \$11.00 by October 1, 2019
 - \$12.00 by September 1, 2020
 - \$13.00 by August 1, 2021
 - \$14.00 on July 1, 2022, and
 - \$15.00 by October 15, 2023.
- After 2023, the minimum wage would be indexed to the Employment Cost Index, a measure of wage growth calculated by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- A training wage that is lower than the standard minimum wage is included for training of all persons under the age of eighteen years except for emancipated minors. This training wage shall not be less than 85% of the minimum fair wage for the first ninety-days of such employment or \$10.10 per hour, whichever is greater.
- Decouples tipping wages for bartenders and servers.

This bill will now move to the Senate where it will be given further consideration. We will be sure to keep you apprised as further details emerge.

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

Relief on the Way for Infuriating Backups on I-91 North at Hartford's Charter Oak Bridge in \$213 Million Project

A \$213 million state highway improvement project is aimed at easing I-91 north that routinely backs up in Hartford before the exit to the Charter Oak Bridge. The steep, one-lane off ramp on the right hand side will be closed and replaced with a left-hand exit, providing a more streamlined on-ramp to the bridge.

This project is aimed at alleviating a bottleneck that can back traffic up for more than a mile, which infuriates commuters, out-of-state travelers, and truck drivers as they wait to connect with I-84 East.

Last month the state Department of Transportation launched its ambitious project that will be completed by 2022. This is aimed at reducing backups that inevitably lead to traffic accidents, as well as improving commuting times.

The project calls for replacing and dismantling the current, one-lane, right-hand Exit 29 that now connects I-91 with the bridge. A new, two-lane, left-hand exit that will also be numbered 29, will be built beginning just after Airport Road. The new exit will be elevated on a bridge to connect more smoothly to the bridge. Additionally, a fourth lane will be added to the Charter Oak Bridge to accommodate the new exit, but can be done with existing dimensions.

This project is part of a larger, 6-mile swath of improvements along I-91 North and South and includes not only improvements to lighting, drainage and medians, but also sorely-needed repaving. The first stages have already begun with an anticipated cost of about \$50 million- 90 percent of which was picked up by federal highway funding. The remaining portion including the new exit to the Charter Oak Bridge will cost about \$163 million, which is all state funding and the proceeds from the sale of state transportation bonds.

[Hartford Courant: Relief on the Way for Infuriating Backups on I-91 North at Hartford's Charter Oak Bridge in \\$213 Million Project](#)

Finance Committee Passes Bill to Take Bonding Authority Away from Governor

The Finance, Revenue, & Bonding Committee voted 46-4 in favor of Senate Chair, John Fonfara's proposal to wrest control of the State Bond Commission away from Governor Lamont. One Democrat and three Republicans voted against the bill.

Senator Kevin Witkos, Senate Ranking Member of the Committee remarked that “The legislature does all this work. Goes to all these public hearings... and then it doesn’t matter whether you’re a Republican or a Democrat, you go to the governor’s office and you have to beg for an item that’s been important to you, an item that’s been vetted by 187 individuals collectively to be funded... I don’t think that is right.”

Fonfara’s proposal would place the Senate President and House Speaker in charge of the bond commission, which oversees all the borrowing for infrastructure projects. The leaders from both parties would replace members of the executive branch on the 10-person board, which is currently chaired by Governor Lamont. The Office of Policy and Management would be replaced by the legislature’s nonpartisan Office of Fiscal Analysis.

Bonding Subcommittee Chair, Rep. Billie Miller said the committee would negotiate a bond package in good faith with the administration, but then have a hard time getting their items on the agenda. She argued that legislators have a better sense of what their communities need than the executive branch.

The Lamont administration fought back and reminded the committee the reason for the progress it made saving the state about \$46 million in interest costs during the recent bond sale. “When politics interfere with sound fiscal policy, the people of Connecticut pay the ultimate price. As legislative leaders and our office have already stated, Senator Fonfara’s proposal raises serious concerns from the executive and legislative branches on both sides of the aisle.”

The committee also advanced legislation that authorizes \$1.7 billion in bonding in 2020 and \$1.6 billion in 2021.

[CTNewsJunkie: Finance Committee Passes Bill to Take Bonding Authority Away from Governor](#)

Toll Foes to Deliver 100,000 Petition Signatures to Gov. Ned Lamont

The group No Tolls CT is preparing to deliver five stacks—each one is larger than a phonebook—containing 100,000 signatures of people opposed to tolling in Connecticut.

No Tolls CT stated that they invited the governor to meet with them to deliver the petition but had not heard a response. A representative from the governor’s office disputed this statement noting that Ryan Drajewicz, the governor’s chief of staff, had reached out to the group’s founder, Patrick Sasser on several occasions this week.

The Lamont’s spokeswoman, Maribel La Luz, stated that “We know that the No Tolls group feels passionately about this issue. So does Gov. Lamont. But people who signed these petitions aren’t saying ‘no’ to tolls—what they’re actually saying yes to is taking out a \$30 billion loan, as proposed by the republicans, recklessly adding to the state’s deficits and requiring Connecticut taxpayers to foot 100 percent of the bill-plus interest.”

Toll foes are girding up for the final four weeks of the legislative session to try to block a controversial plan and signature policy initiative of the new Lamont administration. Toll proponents say that 40 percent of the money collected will come from out-of-state drivers, something that non competing offer has included.

[Hartford Courant: Toll Foes to Deliver 100,000 Petition Signatures to Gov. Ned Lamont](#)

Tracked Bills:

Please see attached document.