

WAXB SECOND QUARTER 2017

ISSUES AND PROGRAMS LIST

Each program is 30 minutes

Each program aired on the date indicated from

0600-0630

Connecticut Radio Network Dialogue 2017 Guests and Subject Matters
(April, May, June)

April 2nd, 2017 - Matt Ritter – State House Majority Leader, Democrat from Hartford.

Subject Matter: On this Dialogue edition, House Democratic Leader Matt Ritter talked about the battle to come up with a balanced budget as it faces a huge deficit. There's also the new dynamic of the legislature this session after the elections, with Democrats holding a much smaller edge in members in the State House of Representatives at 78-71 ... and it being an 18-18 tie in the State Senate. He says lawmakers from both sides are working earnestly on the budget, though they have no preconceived idea on how to do this budget. Representative Ritter says they should have a better idea how to proceed after they get all of the income tax returns after April 15th. He says they know they'll have to think differently from past years, and acknowledges that the budget might have to be done in stages ... or even in a special session. Ritter says they will also entertain Republican proposals and even put them on the board potentially, and says they hope to pass a bipartisan budget.

One of the things that Governor Dannel Malloy proposed in his budget is changing the Education Cost Sharing formula, by giving more money to cities who need it and less to more affluent towns. House Majority Leader Matt Ritter says no matter how you do it there are going to be some towns that get more and some that get less ... especially with a 1.7 billion-dollar deficit. He says you are not going to be able to accommodate everyone's concerns whether it be ECS or some other program that they really like. So, Ritter says you can't have the attitude that you are taking your ball and going home if you don't get your way on one program or funding.

House Majority Leader Matt Ritter says they want an even-handed moderate approach to the budget ... though he says obviously, they aren't going to be able to cut 1.7 billion from the budget. So, he says they have never taken ways of generating new revenue off the table ... a nice way of saying either tax increases or fee increases. Ritter did bring up two things that have been on the chopping block, which he doesn't feel are wise moves because they are for working families: the care 4 Kids program and the Earned Income Tax Credit. He told that Care 4 Kids

April 2nd, 2017 – (Ritter continued) - is a program that allows people to go to work and have their childcare subsidized. Ritter says they have a waiting list of 2-thousand people that want to go to work, want to pay taxes here in the State of Connecticut, but they won't be able to do that because they can't make enough money to afford childcare due to the expense. So, he says there's an example where a cut is not really a good investment for the State of Connecticut and the future of a lot of people. Ritter says they have to weigh these things and find the right balance. He says the Finance Committee and the Appropriations Committee will have to meet somewhere in the middle and try to make it work. As for generating revenue, Ritter feels highway tolls could be a way to do it, sales tax exemptions could be done away with, the cigarette tax could be increased, and they could adjust the estate tax in the state.

Ritter also gave his thoughts on some of Governor Dannel Malloy's budget proposals. He told that there no doubt some of the governor's proposals aren't going anywhere. Ritter explained that Malloy has proposed towns and cities pay a third of teacher pension costs going forward, whereas up until this point the state had paid the whole thing. Ritter says Connecticut is the only state that has done it that way with no local contribution. So, he says he feels the governor is right in saying we should look at this going forward and that it's a good honest conversation to have ... but Ritter says right now they can't dump 400-million dollars on these towns on July 1st of this year.

So, Ritter says they will take a look at tolls for state highways to generate revenue. He says Connecticut's transportation infrastructure is old and in need of repair, so tolls will be needed sooner or later to pay for those repairs and upgrades. Ritter noted that a third of the revenue would be from out-of-staters. He says they will need to also make spending cuts and find efficiencies in the budget. There's also legislation dealing with the legalization of recreational marijuana in Connecticut. He says that may happen eventually, but the votes are not there to pass it this year. In the end, Ritter says they will need to come up with a good budget for the State of Connecticut. June 7th is the end of the regular session, but Ritter says if it takes longer to do it in a special session, so be it.

April 9th, 2017 - Tony Guerrero – Rocky Hill State Representative and Co-Chair of the Legislature’s Transportation Committee.

Subject Matter: This week, Representative Tony Guerrero, Co-Chair of the Legislature’s Transportation Committee and a longtime advocate of tolls, explained on the show why it’s time Connecticut institutes tolls on our highways. He told that Connecticut needs another source of revenue to repair and maintain our roads because the money the state gets from the gas tax keeps going down and down. Guerrero says this is because cars are getting better gas mileage these days, there’s hybrids and electric cars, and soon cars will be even driving by themselves. So, Representative Guerrero feels the best way to go to get that revenue for the state’s highway infrastructure is bring back tolls on Connecticut highways. He says it’s the fairest way, sort of like you use it – you pay for it. Plus, Guerrero told a study shows that 30% would be paid by out of state drivers, who right now don’t pay anything to use our roads ... just driving through for free.

Meantime Representative Tony Guerrero says every other state on the Eastern seaboard have tolls already. So, when Connecticut drivers head out of state they are having to pay tolls in other states, helping to pay for their road maintenance ...while their residents glide through our state without paying a dime. Now he told there’s a reason Connecticut hasn’t had tolls for a long time, and that’s because they were taken down after the tragic 1983 Stratford toll booth crash. A truck plowed into motorists, stopped, waiting to pay their toll, killing 7 people, and injuring others. Soon thereafter Connecticut did away with tolls.

However, Transportation Committee Co-Chair Representative Tony Guerrero says the bringing back tolls now would be very different than back in 1983. He says now they are electronic tolls, so there would be no need to pullover, no stopping, with people driving right through. Guerrero says people get an EZpass and while driving by the electronic reader charges them ... and then they’ll get the bill in the mail. For those that don’t have EZpass a camera would take a picture of their license plate and based on that, they’d get a bill in the mail. Guerrero says Connecticut residents would get a discount for having EZpass, and perhaps they could make it so that Connecticut residents could write off a percentage of their tolls from their state income tax. The Transportation Committee co-chair also says it would be nice too if they could lower the gas tax at the same time by a few cents, when tolls are instituted back on our roads.

Now there is a lot of opposition to tolls from Republican lawmakers who say

April 9th, 2017 - (Guerrera continued) - that is it a tax on drivers. However Representative Tony Guerrera disagrees, saying it's not a tax, it's a user fee. He says the gas tax is a tax ... but that it's bringing in less and less each year. So Guerrera feels tolls are the best way... and they would not just be border tolls, but located throughout the state on the highways. He stated on the show that he told a colleague if they could come up with a better way to fund our highway system let's hear it ... but no one has come up with one. Guerrera says he also does not buy the argument that if the state puts tolls on its highways, people would clog up local roads trying to avoid them. He says people want to get to their destination in the quickest, safest time, which would be the highways. Guerrera also noted that when asked, people have stated that they would pay a little more to get to their destination quicker ... which upgrades from the tolls would help provide. He says we also need a good highway infrastructure in the state so that goods and services move well around Connecticut. But right now, Guerrera says our roads and bridges need repairs, and said we don't want to have another Mianus River Bridge collapse, which occurred right on I-95 in Greenwich in the early 1980's. He says we need to be proactive and not reactive. Guerrera also says Governor Malloy's proposal for a so-called transportation lock box, so that the money goes directly to road and bridge projects, and cannot be diverted.

April 16th, 2017 - Ed Quinlan – Board Member of the Malta Justice Initiative.

Subject Matter: Ed Quinlan first of all explained what the Malta Justice Initiative is on the show. He says it all began with the war on drugs in the 1970's. Quinlan says it's a citizen's constituency with informed citizens who are trying to do something about policy reform in the field of criminal justice, specifically mass incarceration. He says the incarceration rate in the United States is the highest in the world, per capita at 750 per 100-thousand persons ... with it being much higher for minorities. Though here in Connecticut, Quinlan told that the inmate population has gone down quite a bit during Governor Malloy's terms in office. He says so much so that Connecticut has actually closed some prisons. Quinlan also praised Department of Corrections Commissioner Scott Semple, calling him a first-rate leader.

Ed Quinlan of the Malta Justice Initiative discussed on the show a survey they did of Connecticut employers to get their views about hiring ex-offenders. He told that 97% of the Connecticut employers said individuals with criminal records

April 16th, 2017 - (Quinlan continued) - deserve a 2nd chance. However, on the other hand, only 3% of those companies said they are actually hiring people who came out of prison. So, Quinlan says there's a willingness to hire ex-offenders but they need a little push and assistance to do it. For instance, Quinlan says they don't want to be held criminally or civilly liable if they responsibly hire someone who is an ex-offender and then that ex-offender commits a crime or does something that causes a lawsuit. But he admits it would be very tough for the legislature to pass a law giving them immunity. Quinlan said 77% of the employers said they would like to see some support for hiring ex-offenders like tax incentives ...but again that would be tough with the state's budget woes.

Another finding in their survey, told Quinlan, is employers would like the ex-offenders trained in advance. He says that would be a tall order in this economy too and the state's budget deficit, for any programs that would require taxpayer involvement through the state legislature. But Quinlan says they are looking at long-term solutions, and just because there's a problem now with tax revenue and the budget deficit doesn't mean these problems won't subside down the road. Then he says there could be long-term benefits to be had for employers and society in general if it can be resolved where more employers hire ex-offenders.

Ed Quinlan told that the cost of incarceration is about 51-thousand dollars a year. He says 93% of the people who are released and can get a job in the first year they are out aren't as likely to go back to prison. Quinlan says those people are grateful to be given a second chance. But of those that don't get a job, 60% of them are likely to go back to prison by committing another crime.

Quinlan says there is the fear argument that people and employers have in whether to take a chance in hiring an ex-offender. But he says the more success that employers have with hiring ex-offenders, and it becomes more public, more employers will be comforted by that and take a chance in hiring them. Quinlan says smaller businesses seem to have less restrictions than larger corporations do for hiring ex-offenders. But he says 8-thousand people a year get released from Connecticut prisons, so if there's no redemption, none of this is going to work. Quinlan says more public education is needed on this matter, because if you can't successfully reintegrate ex-offenders back into the community, then the whole system doesn't work and you are back to massive incarcerations.

April 23rd, 2017 - Karl Wagener - Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality Executive Director.

Subject Matter: Karl Wagener, Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Environment Quality, explained that they are a state agency – separate from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection – that has an independent role. One of their job he told is to report every year on how well the state’s environment is doing, what’s getting better and what’s getting worse.

Wagener says they just released their annual report. For air quality in Connecticut, Wagener says we are not doing as well as everyone would hope. He says Connecticut does make a real effort on air quality, with standards for our vehicles and our factories probably being amongst the strictest in the nation. He says we don’t burn coal here in Connecticut, but unfortunately our state gets a lot of pollution that heads into Connecticut from the West. Wagener told that because of the warming climate, more and more we are not seeing as much improvement in the air quality as much as one might think, considering all of the effort the state is making. Last year Wagener says there were 31 days when the air in Connecticut was unhealthy, which is about what the average has been for the last 10 years. He says those bad air days happen on hot summer days from ground level ozone from pollutants. Wagener told that last year 2016 was the hottest summer for Connecticut ever. But he says it’s very frustrating because even though Connecticut does generate some air pollution from vehicle exhaust, the cars today are so much cleaner than in the past emitting a lot less pollutants, yet because of the pollution from coal burning power plants to the West, our air is being polluted from those plants in other states.

As far land goes in Connecticut, Karl Wagener told the Department of Agriculture preserved more land in the state than it had in the past couple of years. He says for preserving farmland, Connecticut has a great farmland preservation program. But for preserving other types of land like forests, parks, and wildlife areas, the state’s efforts are way off track in meeting its goals of owning and managing 10% of the state’s land area by 2023. Wagener says the state is not on track to meet that goal.

For water quality, Wagener says again Connecticut does make the effort by spending money to improve sewage treatment plants and remove the nitrogen from the discharges. But he says this past year, despite all of Connecticut’s efforts, the area in Long Island Sound with low oxygen (called hypoxia) expanded, again

April 23rd, 2017 - (Wagener continued) - probably because of the heat. So, like the air Connecticut is making a big effort, but we are not seeing the results in the environment that we'd like to. Inland he says the big rivers are getting better, but smaller streams and brooks by and large are not of the high water quality that probably everybody would wish. In fact, Wagener says, according to DEEP's statistics only 30% of those streams are suitable for swimming because of bacteria and other pollutants, mainly from stuff that runs off the land during rain storms. He says runoff is a large source of pollution. So again, Wagener says it is frustrating that our environment is not getting better in that regard. He says climate change with the heat is not helping us with air or water quality.

Karl Wagener also discussed compliance with environmental laws on the show. He says DEEP inspections are way down. Wagener told that pesticides surveillance is way down from previous years, which is a consequence of budget cuts and lack of personnel to conduct those inspections. He says they know there are violations happening out there that are going undetected. At the federal level, Wagener says with President Trump relaxing standards things could get worse. He says if the feds relax it to the point where states don't have to do mandatory inspections, things will get worse in Connecticut, because we also depend on other states obeying air and water quality standards that would be harmful to our state if they don't.

April 30th, 2017 - Amy Parmenter - Spokesperson for the AAA in Connecticut.

Subject Matter: On this week's show, Amy Parmenter of the Triple-A in Connecticut first discussed what has been behind the recent rise in gas prices. She explained it is certainly normal for gas prices to rise at this time of the year, as prices normally trend up until mid-June. She says while gas prices were going up in the rest of the country, they started to go up later here in Connecticut ... and now Connecticut is playing catch up. So, prices she says are now rising faster in our state and drivers are taking note of it. Parmenter told the two main factors that are causing gas prices to go up at this time of year are: 1.) the switchover from the winter blend of gasoline to the more expensive summer blend, and 2.) we are moving to the busier summer driving season, so demand increases at this time of year. She says they expect gas prices to continue to rise for another 6-weeks or so, possibly up to \$2.85 a gallon in Connecticut, and in some spots (possibly in Fairfield County) upwards of around \$3.00. Parmenter says it is starting to creep

April 30th, 2017 - (Parmenter continued) - up again to a price where more and more people are paying attention to it, and starting to adjust their driving schedule ... but not to the extent to change their summer travel plans. She says summer travel is different because it takes some planning and also tends to involve the whole family, so when people change their behavior it's really in their everyday habits.

On a serious issue, Amy Parmenter told on the show of a new report that's just been released by the Governor's Highway Safety Association that would surprise people. She says it shows in the latest data from 2015 that fatal crashes from **drugged** driving are now actually outnumbering those caused by drunk drivers. Parmenter says 43% tested positive for drugs (that's legal and illegal drugs), while 37% were drunk according to the blood alcohol content in those fatal crashes. She says marijuana was the drug in about a third of the fatal crashes involving drugs, while other impairing drugs were heroin, opioids, oxycodone, and other prescription drugs as well.

Amy Parmenter says drugged driving is one of the reasons why the AAA is opposed to the legalization of recreational marijuana. She told it is much more difficult for law enforcement to gauge how impaired one is, because there is no single accurate roadside test for measuring impairment when it comes to marijuana like there is for alcohol with a breathalyzer test. Parmenter says with a breathalyzer test it accurately measures the person's blood alcohol content, and if it goes above a certain number that person is arrested for drunk driving. She explained that testing for THC in people who use marijuana unfortunately isn't accurate as far as showing who is impaired. Parmenter says people who use marijuana all the time could have a high THC level but not be impaired because they use it often ... but someone who has a lower level of THC in their system, but rarely uses marijuana could be highly impaired. So, she says that test does not provide an accurate assessment of who is, and who is not impaired from marijuana use. Parmenter says police are training some law enforcement as so-called "Drug Recognition Experts" to spot impairment reactions from marijuana and other drug usage in drivers. Currently Parmenter told there's a bill in the legislature to legalize recreational marijuana use ... that didn't make it out of committee, but could come up again in budget discussions as a way to get revenue for the state. She says the AAA will continue to oppose legalizing recreational marijuana, because it's a matter of safety. She also says it could create the perception that it's okay to use marijuana and drive ... which is not something they want here in Connecticut.