

WAXB THIRD QUARTER 2015

ISSUES AND PROGRAM LIST

Each program has a duration of 30 minutes

Each program has aired on the date indicated from 0600-0630

Connecticut Radio Network Dialogue 2015 Guests and Subject Matters
(July, August, September)

July 5th, 2015 - Martin Looney - State Senate President Pro Tempore (D) from New Haven.

Subject Matter: On this week's show State Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney discussed the new state budget that was passed in the general assembly's regular session but then had to be altered in a special session. It is a controversial budget but the top Democratic leader in the State Senate called the budget "historic" and "transformational." Senator Looney told the reason why is the major initiatives in the budget, property tax relief and the transportation funding, which he says are really significant initiatives. He told they made the PILOT program (payment in lieu of taxes) more equitable for towns and cities, where the State of Connecticut partially reimburses municipalities for tax exempt properties like hospitals, colleges, and state property. Senator Looney explained that municipalities with the most tax exempt properties would get greater reimbursements ... setting it up on a 3-tiered structure for reimbursements. He says the 10 communities in the state with the most tax exempt properties would be in the 1st tier getting the greatest reimbursement, then would come the next 25 municipalities in the 2nd tier, and then the 3rd tier would be the other communities held at the current reimbursement level. Senator Looney also told that they made the car tax in the state more equitable no matter where you live by capping it at 32 mills. He explained that the car tax, based on a town or city's mill rate, could in the past have someone paying a tax on the same car in one city 7 times the amount as someone in another town. So he says this will make it more level for all car taxpayers.

Senate President Pro Tem Martin Looney says the major initiative proposed by Governor Malloy was passed in this session to upgrade the state's transportation system. Senator Looney says it is something they do have to look at, dealing not only with roads and bridges but also mass transit like rail and buses.

Now the major controversy with the budget came after it was passed in the regular session and major corporations in the state complained loudly that the business taxes in the budget would be very harmful. This got to the point where some big corporations like G.E., Aetna, and Travelers all threatened to leave the

July 5th, 2015 - (Looney continued) - state. The data processing tax was going to go from the current 1% rate up to 2 or 3%, as well as other taxes. This flare-up did cause Governor Dannel Malloy and the legislature to respond to it, as ultimately some of those taxes were rolled back. Senate President Pro Tem Martin Looney says he wouldn't call the original taxes a mistake, but did open the door for the beginning of a dialogue on tax policy. He explained the concern they have is that the state's sales tax has traditionally been structured to apply to goods and products, but increasingly the economy is based more on services. So Senator Looney told that they are making some efforts to try to expand the sales tax to make it more viable. He also explained that they are seeing more sales tax evasion as more and more people are comfortable buying items over the internet and not paying the sales tax. Senator Looney says it's a difficult situation and obviously there was some pushback from businesses and the legislature did make some adjustments and feels they were responsive.

Another tax that large businesses which operate in Connecticut and elsewhere are not real happy about is Connecticut about to adopt what's called a unitary tax. Given the pushback from big businesses the legislature and governor decided to postpone it until the beginning of next year. Senate President Martin Looney explained on the show what a unitary tax is. He told what the unitary tax does is look at all of the revenue of a corporation, rather than just looking at solely its Connecticut operation. He says it has been adopted by every other state in our region and Looney feels it's a reasonable way of taxing businesses. Senator Looney was asked on the show if it wouldn't be better as a selling point to say to businesses, unlike the other states in the region Connecticut doesn't have the unitary tax, and therefore is another reason to base your operations here in Connecticut. Senator Looney told that there's a significant issue of potentially lost revenue by not adopting a unitary tax and let corporations be on the honor system about how much tax they are going to pay in Connecticut.

July 12th, 2015 - Tanya Johnson - Vice President for Operations at the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Subject Matter: On this Dialogue edition the guest was Tanya Johnson from the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. She discussed the need for judges, police officers, and other officials to have the proper training on domestic violence issues. This came after a high profile incident in Middletown where a father killed his infant son by throwing him off a bridge, and then the father attempted to commit suicide himself but was rescued by authorities. Just days prior to the incident a family court judge denied a restraining order sought against the father by the mother who feared he was a danger to the baby and her. Ms. Johnson told that domestic cases are very complex and that is why it is essential that those who have to intervene such as police and judges, need on-going training to assess domestic violence incidents and cases. She says they need to be able to recognize the essential signs of where that relationship is at, as it pertains to the risk and safety needs of the family and meeting the needs of the victims. Johnson says what appears on the surface may not be what is actually going on, so sometimes you have to see past that and assess the potential for risk and safety. She added that it's not always safe for the victim to tell them everything and that has to always be taken into consideration. Johnson says for a victim of domestic violence it is incredibly scary to walk into a courtroom and tell your story with the defender right there ... so that's another challenge which impedes the process. She says judges have to decide these situations from the information they are given so Johnson feels judges have to have the training and the knowledge to be able to apply the skills to read between the lines and identify the nuances.

Tanya Johnson told on the show that the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence has made progress with police departments across the state for training in domestic violence cases with more than 50% of the departments using the lethality assessment tool as well as the Connecticut State Police. Johnson explained that the tool is a very effective element in terms of engaging the victim of domestic violence. She says it allows the victim to do a self-assessment of the situation and gives the officer a snapshot of what's going on to assess the situation in their investigation. The purpose told Johnson of the lethality assessment tool is to help connect the individual to services to get support to address their immediate trauma.

Also discussed on the show with Tanya Johnson was a bill that the

July 12th, 2015 - (Johnson continued) - Connecticut legislature considered this past session, but ultimately did not pass as they ran out of time. The bill would have prohibited those subjected to a temporary restraining order from possessing guns. Ms. Johnson told it is needed because there is still an outstanding threat for the woman if the accuser still has access to weapons. She says they need the full spectrum of protection for women during this volatile time when a temporary restraining order is issued, and that should also include no guns. She says the coalition is hopeful the legislature will pass this bill in the next session.

July 19th, 2015 - Pat Wrice – Executive Director of Operation Fuel.

Subject Matter: On this week's show Pat Wrice, Executive Director of Operation Fuel, talked about their summer emergency energy assistance program of one million dollars. She told that last year they served 2,780 households during the summer months with that same dollar figure. Wrice says that is half of what they serve during the winter. While most people think of people being in need during the winter months paying their heating bills, Wrice told that there are many people struggling who need help with their summer utility bills. She says the eligibility income requirement guideline is up to 60% of state median household income ... so for a family of 4 Wrice says they could make over 60-thousand dollars a year and still be eligible for the program. Wrice pointed out however that it's not an entitlement program as households really have to demonstrate need and also have shown a good faith effort in trying to pay their utility bills. Ms. Wrice says all applicants are reviewed on a case by case basis. She told that if they qualify a household can get up to \$500 in assistance.

Operation Fuel Executive Director Pat Wrice explained that during the winter months there is a moratorium whereby utility companies cannot shutoff a customer's service for fear they could freeze to death during the bone-chilling winter months. After that moratorium ends on May 1st however is when many customers have problems and they face shutoff. Ms. Wrice told that being without electricity during the summer months is really a dangerous situation to be in too, as you can't even use a fan to keep cool ... let alone having lights, being able to take a shower, and refrigerate food. She noted that a landlord can evict a tenant if they do not have electricity because it puts the rest of the tenants at risk. Wrice also told that the Department of Children and Families considers that an unfit household if a family is sitting in the dark without electricity and they have small

July 19th, 2015 - (Wrice continued) - children.

Pat Wrice told on the show that a report just came out saying that Connecticut has the highest energy costs in the country. She says that is not good because so many people are struggling. Wrice says wages have not gone up much, the elderly constantly struggle, and even many who have a full time job have trouble making ends meet and paying their energy bills. She feels part of the problem for Connecticut's high energy costs, aside from weather, is the fact that Connecticut doesn't have natural resources so everything has to be brought in through pipelines. Wrice says she is a big proponent of alternative sources of energy, because the costs in this state are beyond a lot of people's means.

One of the things Pat Wrice says Operation Fuel has been promoting is the affordable utility rate program based on a percentage of income which many other states have adopted. She says that would be a good beginning to try and get a handle on utility bills for many people that are struggling. But Wrice lamented that it's been over 7 years that Operation Fuel has been pushing for that and unfortunately they haven't gotten anywhere with it. She says though she is going to continue to push for it. Wrice says all of the states in the Northeast have an affordable utility rate program except Connecticut. She says it is a complex issue and they all need to work together to find a solution. Wrice added that the high cost of energy in Connecticut not only impacts residents, but also businesses decide whether or not to locate here.

July 26th, 2015 - Vicki Veltri - State Healthcare Advocate.

Subject Matter: On this week's show Vicki Veltri, Connecticut's Healthcare Advocate, discussed her role in helping people in all aspects of healthcare. She told that the Office of Healthcare Advocate has been in existence for 14 years now. Ms. Veltri explained that they educate people about their healthcare options and plans, and let them know about their healthcare rights. She says they also directly intervene when they have issues related to their healthcare coverage, whether it be a denial of service they think they need, a billing problem, or an eligibility for coverage problem. Veltri says they also advocate systemically when they see patterns over and over again. She says they'll take it to the legislature, congress, or work with the administration to try to resolve issues.

State Healthcare Advocate Vicki Veltri says right now the most common

July 26th, 2015 - (Veltri continued) - thing they are helping people with surrounds the public enrolling in Access Health CT for health coverage under the Affordable Care Act. She says they get a lot of questions about people's rights under the exchange plans as compared to regular healthcare coverage. They've been also getting a lot of questions from people about the enrollment process. Veltri says they get lots and lots of calls that are related to using health insurance now, because before the Affordable Healthcare Act many of these people did not have insurance. She says then there are the traditional healthcare questions related to medical necessity issues. This is where a person is thought to need a service or medication and the healthcare plan denies it. Veltri says they help them out by appealing it. In clinical cases she told that mental health and substance abuse cases are still dominant. Plus Veltri says they get lots and lots of calls about billing issues and confusion about what exactly they are being billed for.

August 2nd, 2015 - Steven Reviczky - State Agriculture Commissioner.

Subject Matter: On this week's show State Agriculture Commissioner Steven Reviczky talked about the summer growing season in Connecticut. He told that it has been a terrific season for Connecticut crops especially strawberries and sweet corn. He ran down the list of wonderful summer crops grown here in the state: apples, green beans, beats, blueberries, broccoli, cabbage, cantaloupes, carrots, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, herbs, leeks, lettuce, nectarines, onions, peaches, pears, peppers, plums, potatoes, summer squash, sweet corn, tomatoes, watermelon, and even winter squash.

With all of these fresh and tasty summer crops grown here in Connecticut people want to know that they are buying locally grown crops when they go to farmer's markets. So the legislature this past session passed a law that takes effect on October 1st, where by at farmer's markets the product will have to have signage to identify where it was grown. State Agriculture Commissioner Steven Reviczky told that this transparency is good to have because people in Connecticut want to buy fresh locally grown product and to support our local economy as well. He told that sometimes in the past people were under the impression they were buying something locally grown when in fact it was imported from somewhere else. Now Reviczky says people will know for sure if it was grown locally here in Connecticut at farmer's markets. He told however that unfortunately the law

August 2nd, 2015 - (Reviczky continued) - doesn't affect farm stands or supermarkets which they had hoped it would. Reviczky hopes the legislature will revisit the matter and include farm stands and supermarkets as well. He added that Connecticut farmers should be given credit for the products they grow by labeling it as such, no matter where it's sold.

State Agriculture Commissioner Steven Reviczky told on the show that farmer's markets are big in Connecticut. He says there are 125 or more in the state, which means virtually everyone lives or works in close proximity to a farmer's market which is exciting. And he added that while farmer's markets are huge in the summertime there are a growing number of wintertime markets as well. Reviczky says there are other products sold at farmer's markets in the colder months like cheeses, dairy products, meats, sausages, shellfish, and seafood that are available 12 months of the year. So he says winter markets are catching on in the state and are growing. Reviczky says it's good for farmers too because they need income 12 months a year.

Many people don't realize but in the Department of Agriculture in Connecticut there is a Bureau of Aquaculture. State Agriculture Commissioner Steven Reviczky told in fact that the largest farm which exists is actually underwater in Long Island Sound. He says it's a shellfish farm! Reviczky explained that the Aquaculture Bureau leases state held land under Long Island Sound to farmers who grow clams and oysters. Reviczky told that they are constantly testing the water and the shellfish meats to ensure that the shellfish are safe for human consumption.

Agriculture Commissioner Reviczky also talked about a couple of troubling situations they are dealing with. He explained that they are keeping tabs on the Avian flu that has killed poultry in the West and Midwest. Reviczky says they are developing a plan because this is serious. He told that Connecticut has more chickens than people and the poultry industry in Connecticut produces 3 million eggs a day. So they really have to guard against the Avian flu. Reviczky also told that the State Agriculture Department deals with animal cruelty cases. He says they are dealing with a case in Cornwall where they had to take malnourished goats away from a farm and are having a sealed bid auction for them.

Commissioner Reviczky says agriculture is doing very well in Connecticut and has increased 22% in recent times, which is the fastest growing in all of New England. He told that agriculture contributes 3.5 billion to the state's economy.