

March 2nd, 2014 - Betsy Ritter - Deputy House Speaker (D) from Waterford.

Subject Matter: On this show Deputy House Speaker Betsy Ritter discussed a bill before the legislature called the aid in dying bill. Representative Ritter told that this bill would help terminally ill people end their lives using doctor prescribed drugs. She explained that the person would have to be mentally competent and able to make their own decisions to get from their physician a life-ending prescription and to take it themselves. Ritter says this legislation would also protect the prescribing physician from liability of assisting the patient on their way to their death.

Representative Betsy Ritter told on the show that people who want to see the aid in dying bill passed do not use the terms "assisted suicide" or "suicide" but rather the terminology "aid in dying." She explained that they use the word aid because it is actually an aid in bringing about one's death. But Ritter told listeners that they have to understand that these people are dying of a terminal disease. She says suicide has a totally different meaning in our society today. Representative Ritter told that suicide is an act of violence that one commits upon themselves and most often out of a condition of despair, mental illness, or mental incompetency. She also explained that the term suicide has a lot of societal implications such as viewing one contemplating suicide as being depressed, angry, desperate, not trustworthy, and one who might even commit an act of violence. Representative Ritter says that is not the type of situation with the people who want this bill passed, but rather want a legal humane way to die without suffering further from their terminal illness, and also have some dignity and control over their own circumstances.

Deputy House Speaker Betsy Ritter explained that if the aid in dying bill ever becomes law the process would start off with the dying patient making a written request to their attending physician. The doctor would then verify the prognosis and have to deem the person mentally competent and inform the person of the consequences of their decision. That doctor would then in turn refer the patient to a consulting physician to verify the situation. If all conditions are met the patient would be counseled by the physician and given a prescription for a life ending medication (in pill form). Ritter says only the patient can administer the medication to one's self ... not the doctor. So Ritter says this is not doctor assisted,

March 2nd, 2014 - (Ritter continued) - as the doctor does not for instance give the patient a needle injection. The terminally ill patient, told Ritter, takes the aid in dying pill of their own volition.

Representative Betsy Ritter told on the show that obviously this is very controversial legislation. She noted that religious groups are opposed to it. But she says a poll done in Connecticut shows that the people of Connecticut support having the aid in dying bill become law by a 2-to-1 margin.

March 9th, 2014 - Doug Schwartz - Director of the Quinnipiac University Poll.

Subject Matter: On this Dialogue edition Doug Schwartz, Director of the Quinnipiac University Poll, discussed their recent polls on the governor's race in Connecticut and other issues. On the poll concerning the governor's race Doug Schwartz says they matched up incumbent Governor Dannel Malloy ... who is likely to be the Democratic nominee ... against possible Republican candidates. Q-Poll Director Schwartz told that they found in their poll that Governor Malloy would defeat 5 out of the 6 Republicans by between a margin of 6 and 11 points. However Schwartz says there was one GOP candidate who tied Governor Malloy ... Tom Foley, who just narrowly lost to Malloy in the 2010 election. Schwartz says if the election were held today both Malloy and Foley would get 42% of the vote. As for the other GOP candidates he says they are not known enough by the voters including State Senate Republican leader John McKinney and Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton.

As for Governor Malloy's approval numbers Q-Poll Director Doug Schwartz says people do give him high marks for the way he has handled snowstorms, with 86% saying they approved of the job he did. But Schwartz says that is not translating into any higher public approval for Governor Malloy on overall approval on the job he is doing. He says when they asked if Governor Malloy deserves to be re-elected 45% said yes while 46% said no. As for reasons why Malloy is not more popular with the voters Doug Schwartz says it stems back to the across the board tax hikes the governor put forth when he came into office to deal with the state's budget deficit. He says people felt more should have been done to cut spending or tax the rich not the middle class. Also Schwartz says

March 9th, 2014 - (Schwartz continued) - despite the fact that the governor conveys to people that the state's economy is doing better by running a surplus and adding jobs ... the public's perception is not in tune with the governor's. Schwartz told that in their poll only 16% feel the economy is getting better. Consequently President Obama also has his worst poll numbers here in Connecticut with only 45% feeling Obama is doing a good job. Schwartz says at one point in time President Obama's job approval rating was 71% here in Connecticut. The Q-Poll director feels the main reason Obama's numbers have dropped is because of the problems with the rollout of the Affordable Care Act and website glitches whereby people have had a difficult time signing up.

On other issues that the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute polled on Doug Schwartz told that 71% of Connecticut voters would support increasing the minimum wage in Connecticut. Here in our state the minimum wage just went up to \$8.70 an hour. The governor and President Obama are pushing for the minimum wage to be increased to \$10.10 an hour and over 60% of Connecticut voters favor it going up to that level.

Q-Poll Director Doug Schwartz also told that there is broad support in Connecticut for a bill before the legislature called the "aid in dying" bill. This would allow a terminally ill patient to be able to sign a legal document to get life-ending drugs. Schwartz says this is supported by Connecticut voters by almost a 2-to-1 margin ... and it goes across age, gender, and party lines. He says people feel they or loved ones should have the right to decide themselves when to end life if they are terminally ill and in pain.

One area that Connecticut voters are against however is another form of a gambling game called Keno. Q-Poll Director Doug Schwartz says more than 60% of Connecticut voters are opposed to Keno in the state, feeling we don't need any more forms of gambling.

March 16th, 2014 - Martin Looney - State Senate Majority Leader, Democrat from New Haven.

Subject Matter: On this edition of Dialogue the guest was State Senate Democratic leader Martin Looney who discussed the issues facing the 2014 general assembly session. But first he was asked about the surprising announcement that had occurred when his colleague and leader of the State Senate, President Pro Tem Donald Williams announced that he would not be seeking re-election. Senator Looney told that the timing of the announcement by Senator Williams was a surprise even to him as he had thought that Williams would continue for another term. Looney says they have collaborated now for more than a decade and feels he had a very effective partnership with Williams. Senator Looney says that Williams has been a superb president pro tem for the last 10 years ... the longest serving president pro tem. He says that Donald Williams is one who knows how to build consensus and has a vision for things the state should adopt as policy. Looney says Williams also had the ideal temperament for the position and is certainly going to be missed. He says Williams has left a great legacy of achievement in areas of providing for greater protection for farmland and land preservation, abolishing the death penalty, and so many other things. After this final term for Senator Donald Williams the Senate Majority leader Martin Looney told listeners that he already has the commitment of support from fellow Democrats to be elected as the next senate president pro tem succeeding Donald Williams ... provided the fall elections turn out that the Democrats are still in the majority for next year's legislature, which he is looking forward to.

On the issues Senator Martin Looney was asked about the governor's plan to give some money back to the taxpayers out of the state's growing surplus. At the time it was estimated at 500-million dollars. Looney says part of the money would go into the state's so-called rainy day fund for future emergencies, some of it would be used to pay off state debt, but another portion would go to Connecticut residents ... a \$55 check to individual tax filers; \$110 to joint filers. Senator Looney says it's a time to share modestly with the people of Connecticut who have been paying the taxes and provide some extra help to these people by returning some extra dollars to them. While he said it's a modest amount it will be meaningful to people, especially for lower income people. He brushed aside critics' remarks that it's the governor's way to try and buy votes by giving a small

March 16th, 2014 - (Looney continued) - tax refund to the people of Connecticut.

Senate Majority Leader Martin Looney also discussed on the show legislation that he's proposing to establish a retirement savings fund for private sector workers who work for companies that because they may be too small don't offer any kind of 401K, pension, or any other retirement benefit. Looney explained that an increasing number of people do not have retirement income other than social security. He says these people in effect go off of a financial cliff when they retire. Senator Looney says the maximum social security benefit for an individual is about 16-thousand dollars a year, and more and more employees are not covered by any pension plan. He says this is an impending fiscal crisis that is only going to get worse. Looney says what needs to be done is to try to find a way to offer more options for saving and it's important that a payroll deduction option be offered. He says without the payroll deductions many people just don't have the discipline to save unless it's forced by a payroll deduction. Looney says that a lot of employers say it is too expensive to offer 401K plans because it's too expensive with an employer administrative fee or employer contribution involved. He says with his plan there will not be an employer contribution or employer administrative fees with the costs being borne by the workers who participate and the fund would be managed by the State of Connecticut and supervised by the state treasurer and state controller. Senator Looney explained that there used to be a three legged stool for retirement: personal savings, social security, and pensions ... but that increasingly one of those legs has been knocked out of that stool. So he says this is a way to help people save money for retirement because otherwise we will have increasing numbers of very low income retired people.

March 23rd, 2014 - Pat Wrice - Executive Director of Operation Fuel.

Subject Matter: This week on Dialogue the guest was the Executive Director of Operation Fuel Pat Wrice. Operation Fuel had just received some good news in that it would receive a 2.5 million dollar donation from Northeast Utilities as part of an agreement with the Connecticut attorney general's office relating to penalties that the office had sought due to poor performance in restoring power in the 2011 Nor'easter. Pat Wrice says they are very pleased with the size of the donation ... the largest corporate donation ever to Operation Fuel. In fact Wrice stated they were still pinching themselves that it is a large REAL donation and not a dream. She said they had no idea that they were even being considered so it came as a complete surprise to them. Wrice told listeners that they have served 37-hundred households with a little over 2-million dollars since December, so the 2.5 million dollar donation will make a very big impact on potentially how many families they can help out to pay their fuel bills. Ms. Wrice says unfortunately it has been a tough winter and families are feeling it. She stated though that they didn't know when the money would be coming in so Wrice says they are continuing to operate and asking for support as though that money hadn't been announced. She says they still need to get through the remaining cold (if not snowy) winter-like weather ... as well as an often times chilly spring when people still need fuel for heat. So Wrice says they are operating as if they didn't hear the news. But she says that it helps ease some of the anxiety around how Operation Fuel is going to continue.

Operation Fuel Executive Director Pat Wrice says the type of people they help pay fuel bills is really across the board. She says the majority of people they help are families that are actually working 40 hours or more. Wrice says though they are seeing an alarming rate of increase in the number of seniors needing fuel assistance. She says requests from seniors have doubled from the previous year, which is a troubling situation.

Pat Wrice of Operation Fuel explained that they don't provide any dollars to the families and households that they serve. She told that they will order oil on their behalf and when the oil is delivered the bill goes directly to Operation Fuel ... not to the client. If it's a utility bill the client submits the bill to Operation Fuel and they will pay it. Wrice told that the maximum they give out is a \$500 payment for one time only.

March 30th, 2014 - (Boucher continued) - high here in Connecticut while the state is 50th out of 50 states in job growth.

On the issues Senator Toni Boucher was very strongly against the Democrat's proposal which they pushed through to raise the minimum wage in the state to \$10.10 an hour by the year 2017. She told that this is not the time to be raising the minimum wage when the state has still not fully recovered from the recession and have only recovered 50% of the jobs that were lost. Boucher says businesses are still struggling in Connecticut and restaurants all over the state have not recovered the number of customers they used to have. She stated now you are going to put more burden on them by raising the minimum wage.

Senator Toni Boucher says she did not vote for the minimum wage hike bill ... nor she told has she ever voted for a minimum wage increase. She says she'd oppose this hike even in times of surpluses because she believes that the income gap is directly related to the education gap. Boucher told that individuals would rather have a job at \$8.75 an hour rather than no job because of \$10.10 an hour. She says a small business or restaurant has only two choices when the hourly wages of their employees is raised ... either raise the price of their product or lay someone off. Boucher told that a restaurant owner told her that it was going to cost him a thousand dollars a week, 50-thousand dollars a year. She says that could equate to two jobs right there. Boucher says that was all politics for Malloy and the Democrats in the state to go along with President Obama who is pushing this.

Another gimmick in her opinion that State Senator Toni Boucher blasted on the show was Governor Malloy's proposal to give out \$55 tax rebate checks from the state running a modest budget surplus. She stated that this is an election year ploy and wouldn't be surprised if the checks arrived in people's mailboxes just before November 4th which is Election Day. Boucher says people laugh about this because \$55 won't even buy a tank of gas these days. She says what the state should really be doing is enacting real income tax reform.

Meantime Toni Boucher discussed the problems the Metro-North Railroad has had over the last year with accidents involving deaths and injuries. She said there was a total failure with mismanagement and poor oversight for running a safe and efficient railroad. Now there's a new management team in place at

March 30th, 2014 - (more Boucher continued) - Metro-North which Senator Boucher told they've met with. She says they have warned them that they'll be paying close attention and expect the railroad to make improvements especially with regards to safety. Boucher also told that Connecticut's contract with Metro-North comes up in 2015 and if these improvements aren't made the state will put out to bid the running of the railroad.