

WAXB SECOND 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

(April, May, June)

April 5th, 2015 - Kevin Lembo - Democratic State Comptroller.

Subject Matter: On this week's show State Comptroller Kevin Lembo discussed the budget deficit situation the State of Connecticut is in. At the beginning of April Lembo issued his monthly report on the status of the current year's state budget and he reported a projected deficit of 172 million dollars, which was up from the previous month. He says he feels even though it doesn't quite hit the threshold that would require the governor to go to the legislature to consult with them on how to fix this deficit, that it's close enough to engage the legislature. Lembo feels Governor Dannel Malloy should get together with the appropriators in the legislature, with all of their individual values and priorities in the conversation about where further cuts should be made ... or other strategies to get them through the fiscal year and zero out the deficit.

On the show State Comptroller Lembo was asked why, with supposedly the economy improving, does the deficit keep growing? He told that one reason is the State of Connecticut has been in an ongoing conversation over Medicaid reimbursement from the federal government. Lembo says that has come to a conclusion, and the impact from that is going to be a 45 million dollar shortfall in money that had been anticipated coming into state coffers. He also told that there are certain tax credits that are being claimed against tax liability at a pace that is higher than had been expected. However when it comes to the continuing budget deficit Mr. Lembo says the real big issue is revenue. He says some of the revenue streams are not coming together that the administration assumed they would.

State Comptroller Kevin Lembo told that the tax volatility of the state, together with an inadequate rainy day fund, is really what leads to up and down budget cycle woes for the State of Connecticut. He says two tax categories – corporate and quarterly filers – are the ones that drive the state to the highest highs and all the way down to the lowest lows. Lembo says we need to find a way to smooth that out. This is why he told he's proposing that those two revenue streams be looked at over a 10 year period, figure out what the average in that 10 years is

April 5th, 2015 - (Lembo continued) - of growth, and then capture in good economic times money above that. Lembo says perhaps 4% above that they should squirrel away every dollar for the next recession that without a doubt he says is coming at some point in the future. He also added that in good economic times make it mandatory to pay down the unfunded liability. State Comptroller Lembo told on the show if the state had done this 10 years ago, the state would have had adequate savings in the rainy day fund to weather two recessions and without major cuts or a tax increase. He says to do this is asking for some discipline and to look out 10 and 20 years into the future. Lembo says states that have done this have seen improvements in their bond rating. He says if Connecticut does this it'll get off of this rollercoaster. Lembo added that right now the state has about 500-million in its rainy day fund.

April 12th, 2015 - Michael Lawlor - Criminal Justice Advisor to Governor Dannel Malloy.

Subject Matter: On this week's show Michael Lawlor, Criminal Justice Advisor to Governor Dannel Malloy, discussed a newly released report analyzing possible racial and ethnic bias in police traffic stops. He told that this is tied to a law in the state that outlaws racial profiling. Lawlor says that is defined as stopping a car solely on the basis of the race of the operator. He explained that with that law came the obligation of police to report data about each traffic stop. Lawlor says his office was asked to analyze the data pulled directly from the data systems of police departments. He says they have analyzed the results of more than 620-thousand traffic stops over the last year.

Michael Lawlor says the statistics show that 5 police jurisdictions in the state: Groton town, Granby, Waterbury, and the State Police Troops in the Hartford and Tolland regions have "significant disparities" in the stops of minority motorists that appear to be significantly higher than in comparable communities. There were also a half a dozen other police departments that were also found to have "statistical disparities" that may indicate the presence of racial and ethnic bias in who gets pulled over. Those police departments are in Wethersfield, Hamden, Manchester, New Britain, Stratford, and East Hartford.

April 12th, 2015 - (Lawlor continued) -

The governor's criminal justice advisor Michael Lawlor says these police departments are contacted and the next step will be to review the data with them. He says they can find out if it's just the problem of a couple of specific officers, or a whole department with racial bias in who they stop. Lawlor says if that's the case training courses are offered on fair and impartial policing to try and prevent racial profiling traffic stops. He told listeners that if anyone would like to see the results of the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project and the analysis and findings of traffic stops over the last year in Connecticut, they can view them at this website: ctrp3.com.

Michael Lawlor also told on the show that next year a report will be coming out for the first time in Connecticut on the use of tasers by police departments in Connecticut. He says they are now collecting all of the data. Lawlor pointed out that in the past, policy debates on these types of issues have been driven by anecdotal stories from people ... but very rarely with actual data. However he says next year we will know for sure how many times officers in Connecticut used a taser against a suspect. Lawlor says we will also know against whom they were used, the reasons why they were used, and the outcome including deaths. He says policymakers need to know exactly what's going on ... as you can't manage something unless you can actually measure it.

April 19th, 2015 - Merrill Gay - Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance.

Subject Matter: On this edition of Dialogue Merrill Gay, Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, discussed the alliance's efforts to reverse budget cuts proposed by Governor Dannel Malloy to early childhood programs. He told that probably the biggest program that could be cut is Husky-A. Mr. Gay says this would affect some 34-thousand parents and pregnant women who would be taken off Husky with the expectation that they would then buy plans on the health exchange. He says the track record based on what's happened in other states, is about a third of those families don't end up getting insured because they can't afford it. Gay told that low income families are already struggling to pay rent

April 19th, 2015 - (Gay continued) - and childcare and are having trouble making ends meet. He says these are the families who are likely not to purchase the insurance and just fall through the cracks.

Merrill Gay also told that there are cuts to community plans for early childhood. He explained that they have 41 communities that have local early childhood councils that have developed local community plans. Gay says they use a small state grant (usually under 20-thousand dollars) which is the basis for generating match revenue from private foundations. He says it enables those local councils to develop local plans to address problems locally.

The Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance Merrill Gay told on the show that cuts to early childhood programs are shortsighted. He stated that early childhood programs are not a partisan issue. Gay says he was encouraged that members of both parties indicated that the legislature did not agree with the governor's cuts and that the legislature's budget would look very different. Mr. Gay was hopeful things would change because he told early childhood is about building for our future. Gay says Connecticut has an aging population and a shrinking birthrate so it's that much more important that the kids who are being born here grow up to really reach their potential.

Merrill Gay says there's a growing child poverty problem in Connecticut. He told that because it's such a high cost of living state even families at 200% of the federal poverty line are really struggling to make ends meet. Gay says we have 28.5% of our children in Connecticut living below 200% of poverty, in this the richest state in the country. He says there's a whole series of things where poverty has an impact on kid's development and academic performance. Two areas where the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance are very pleased with Governor Malloy on is his proposals to increase the number of slots in Pre-K programs and pushing for all-day kindergarten. Mr. Gay said now they also need to increase the wages for early childhood teachers. He told that with a low wage rate there's always a constant turnover as people go to find jobs that pay better.

On the show Merrill Gay also discussed the need for greater access to mental health services for young children. He says obviously behavioral health services became a huge issue after Sandy Hook. Gay says there was a big study and plan

April 19th, 2015 - (more Gay continued) - put together. He told that there were concerns that not enough focus was being put on very young children. Gay says there was also the issue of parents having mental health issues and its effect on children. He explained that parents being depressed, which happens especially in low income households struggling to make ends meet, can have a very detrimental effect causing developmental delays for their children. Gay told that there is a strong correlation between poverty and material depression, and there's a report that says 1 in 9 children in poverty are living with a parent who has got depression. Gay says they would like to see universal screening for behavioral health problems and better treatment resources available for families where they do detect a problem for a young child.

April 26th, 2015 - James Albis - East Haven Democratic State Representative, and Co-Chair of the Legislature's Environment Committee.

Subject Matter: This week's guest on Dialogue was State Representative James Albis, the Co-Chair of the Legislature's Environment Committee. Earth Day 2015 had just occurred so Representative Albis talked about how the state is doing environmentally, and discussed environmental issues that his committee is taking up in this year's general assembly session. In general Representative Albis feels Connecticut is in better shape than many other states in the country as for how the state is doing environmentally. He says the state has done a lot in trying to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Albis told that Connecticut is far ahead of other states in that regard and in fact the state has already met its 2020 goals for emissions. He stated that for air quality Connecticut is doing fine as well ... though he says that Connecticut gets some dirty air coming into the state from the West. For water quality Representative Albis says the state has very good groundwater. He says Connecticut doesn't have a problem with drinking water like many mid-Western states do. Albis did say however there are some things that need to be addressed, like hypoxia in Long Island Sound ... a lack of oxygen in the water for fish to breathe and survive. He also told that storm water runoff is another big issue which the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is trying to come to an agreement with towns on for keeping chemicals out of waste water.

April 26th, 2015 - (Albis continued) -

One of the pieces of legislation that Representative James Albis' Environment Committee is looking at to possibly become law deals with phasing out the use of plastic bags at grocery and other stores. He told that this bill would create a fee associated with plastic and paper bags at the point of sale at stores. Representative Albis says they want to push the trend to reusable bags instead of plastic bags that pollute the environment and are not biodegradable. He says the bill calls for a 10-cent fee for every plastic or paper bag used at checkout. Albis says the idea is to reduce the use of plastic bags and for people to use reusable cloth bags. He says the bill calls for a 4 year phase-out of the plastic bags. Albis says plastic bags are bad for the environment for litter, cleanup, blight, its impacts to marine ecosystems, and even to single stream recycling when people mistakenly toss them in as they sometimes clog the machinery. So Albis says there are a lot of external costs to the use of plastic bags.

Another bill that Representative James Albis' Environment Committee is supporting before the legislature this session is one that would ban cosmetics and other products containing plastic microbeads. Representative Albis says these microbeads are very small plastic balls that get put into cosmetic products and personal care products. He explained that they pass right through wastewater treatment systems into rivers and streams and into areas where there are fish who mistake it for fish food. Albis says those fish are eventually eaten by human beings. So he says they are significantly impacting these marine ecosystems. Albis says many companies have already started to remove their products that contain microbeads from shelves like Unilever, Proctor and Gamble, and L'Oréal. He also says a big issue with the plastic microbeads is that they are not biodegradable, so they want to get them off the shelves.

May 3rd, 2015 - Beth Bye - Democratic State Senator from West Hartford, and Co-Chair of the Legislature's Appropriations Committee.

Subject Matter: On this Dialogue show, State Senator Beth Bye discussed the state budget plan that her Appropriations Committee put out. The budget that they turned out is 605 million dollars more than Governor Dannel Malloy's budget. Senator Bye noted however that even though their budget is over the governor's they did come in 500 million dollars below current services for the first fiscal year and 700 million below for 2016-17. She says they had to make some very difficult cuts, but on average over the 2-years they put back in 300 million dollars a year. Senator Bye says it would have been very easy to put in more, as they were not able to fund everything they wanted to fund, that's for sure she told. But she says they believe their budget is a statement about what the people of Connecticut need after hours and hours of public hearings. Senator Bye told that predominantly they put back dollars in the budget for healthcare, developmental disabilities, and human services.

One group that wasn't pleased with the Appropriations Committee's budget was those for more charter and magnet schools in Connecticut ... as the Appropriations Committee budget allows for no new charter schools and no new magnet schools. Senator Beth Bye however told on the show that it's important to note that they did increase funding for charter schools by over 4 million dollars in the first year and 7 million dollars in the second year. She explained that they asked for NEW programs and this is not a year where they could fund new programs ... but in fact they did add money to charter schools.

Senator Beth Bye says they wanted to produce a budget that would be good for the families of Connecticut such as making sure funding for state parks was maintained so that people could enjoy that. She also told that they restored funding to libraries. Senator Bye explained that more and more education is reliant on technology and libraries are a place – no matter your income – where students can go and access resources to help them do their basic homework. She says if the state is serious about closing the achievement gap they have to look at all the things related to that. Bye says these are quality of life issues with places that we share such as parks and libraries. The other thing Senator Bye says they tried to focus on was jobs. She says there were a lot of cuts in the job training programs

May 3rd, 2015 - (Bye continued) - for the long-term unemployed that had had good success. Bye says they feel our workforce is one of the most critical things for the state's economic development, so they looked at restoring things like summer youth employment, so kids get jobs and learn those job skills. She says in that way when they come out of school they are good workers. Senator Bye told that companies are not in Connecticut because it's cheap to do business here ... they are here because of our workforce.

Appropriations Committee Chair Senator Beth Bye also talked about on the show the need to redefine the state spending cap ... as they have a different interpretation of it, where some things that have been considered in the past, shouldn't be. She explained that the spending cap exempts evidence of indebtedness from being counted under the spending cap. Senator Bye says traditionally Connecticut has counted long term debts related to state employees, judges, and teachers' retirement, as well as other long term obligations in the current budget. She says what that means is counting that in the spending cap takes up a lot of space under the cap and would discourage them from making important contributions to stop state debt from being worse further out. Senator Bye says she feels pretty confident that their interpretation is correct and will hold up. In closing Senator Bye says she feels the legislature passing a budget by the June deadline is doable and they'll put in however much time it takes to get it done for the people of Connecticut.

May 10th, 2015 - Len Fasano - State Senate Republican Leader from North Haven.

Subject Matter: This week the guest on Dialogue was State Senator Len Fasano who is the Connecticut Senate GOP leader. He discussed on the show the hearing Republicans were going to be holding on tax hikes proposed by the Democrat-controlled Finance Committee. Senator Fasano says that proposal would raise 1.6 billion dollars of new state taxes and 600 million from municipal state taxes. He says that would come from an increased sales tax which will then be shifted to a municipal account. So all told Senator Fasano says it is about 2.4 billion dollars in new taxes and there hasn't been a public hearing on any one of those new taxes.

May 10th, 2015 - (Fasano continued) - He says the ideas were put together very quickly by the Finance Committee and Republicans believe the public should have a chance to come to the State Capitol and have a chance to voice their views on these new taxes. Senator Fasano told that if you're going to push forward with 2.4 billion dollars in new taxes ... this following 6.4 billion dollars in taxes over the last 4 years... then people should have the right to voice their opinion on it. He says if the Democratic majority is not going to go it, then Republicans are. So this would not be an official public hearing, as majority Democrats control the legislature ... but it would be an informational hearing by Republicans. Senator Fasano stated that they are elected by people and if they're upset then they don't get re-elected ... so they should hear out the public on how they feel about the proposed tax hikes.

Senator Len Fasano says Republicans have also set up a website and a petition drive. He told the website is www.nonewcctaxes.com where people can also submit their own testimony in the event they can't show up for the hearing and the testimony will be submitted. But he told that there is nothing like a voice and a person at the public hearing to demonstrate if they are upset about these taxes or feel they are justifiable. As far as the Democrats tax proposal, Senator Fasano told that he was surprised because people are moving out of this state and businesses are leaving the state. Senator Fasano says the taxes that Democrats want to pass do not help low income people, do not help the cities, and do not help the middle class. Fasano says this tax proposal from Democrats comes after Governor Malloy's largest tax increase in Connecticut history back in 2011 which was 1.6 billion dollars in his "shared sacrifice" budget. The problem Fasano told is that Malloy never got the 1.6 billion dollars in concessions from state employees that he said he was going to get ... coming up 253 million dollars short. So every year he explained the state is trying to find that amount of money. Fasano says the governor should go back to the employees unions and get those savings that he promised.

As for a budget this year, Senate GOP leader Len Fasano says the only proposed budget that is balanced and under the state spending cap is the Republican's budget, not Governor Malloy's or the Democrat's budget. Unfortunately Senator Fasano says so far the governor has not invited Republicans to be part of the budget solution, though he should, as it should be bipartisan.