

February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - Mark Waxenberg - Executive Director of the Connecticut Education Association.

Subject Matter: On this show Mark Waxenberg, Executive Director of the Connecticut Education Association, discusses why they have problems with some of Governor Malloy's education proposals outlined in his budget. The governor proposes changing the education cost sharing formula that is used to send state school aid to cities and towns. A court decision did come down on this saying the state should be doing more. So, the governor's plan would essentially take money from the richer towns and give it to the poorer, underperforming school districts across the state. Waxenberg told that while the CEA agrees that there should be a rebalancing of the way funding is given to districts across the state, they feel the governor's plan doesn't just take money away from the richer communities, but is also taking a significant amount away from middle class communities as well. He says middle class communities need those dollars to operate their school districts effectively and that is a real concern. Waxenberg says based on numbers that they've seen, about 76 school districts get some form of increased aid and the others do not ... they'll see a loss.

CEA Executive Director Waxenberg told that what you're going to have in effect, based on Governor Malloy's proposal, is poorer communities that need the services that have been denied them, will crawl their way back. But on the other hand, he says there will be a reduction in programs, services, and staff in the middle-class communities in the state. Waxenberg says in effect you're robbing from Peter to pay Paul, which is going to disadvantage the majority of the school districts which are middle class. He says they recognize that there are communities across the state that can do very well without any state money ... i.e. Greenwich, New Canaan, etc., but then there are others that desperately need those state dollars that will now be denied them, causing a lot of problems across the state.

CEA Executive Director Mark Waxenberg says their organization is looking to talk with the Malloy administration and restructure the list of towns to not get funding. But he told that one of the problems with education funding in Connecticut is that it is underfunded by 700-million dollars in their view. Waxenberg says the state may have to realize that we are at a point in time where a new revenue reality is needed to fund education in the state. He explained that 36 other states in the nation have implemented some form of statewide property tax on

February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - (Waxenberg continued) – on a progressive basis. He says not to add to existing taxes, but to examine the total tax structure in the State of Connecticut may be needed to raise more money for education funding, so we don't have towns that are winners or losers for funding across our state.

Another proposal Governor Malloy has made that would affect teachers is on teacher pensions. He doesn't want to make any changes in benefits, but the governor wants to make a change in the way it's paid for. Right now, the State of Connecticut is picking up 100% of teacher pension costs. Governor Malloy is proposing that towns contribute one third of those costs. Mark Waxenberg told on the show he thinks that proposal by the governor is significantly misguided. He says what will happen is the town's bill will be passed onto the school system, which in effect will have to cut programs to pay for the town's bill. Waxenberg says this would be over 400-million dollars. Waxenberg feels it's poor policy and will lead to further disruption on top of the Education Cost Sharing cuts to a lot of towns and could be devastating.

On the new federal Education Secretary Betsy DeVos in the Trump administration, Mark Waxenberg on the show said clearly, she is not qualified or competent for the position. He says she has a very narrow focus to the job, focusing on vouchers and school choice. Waxenberg says it's disheartening because the overwhelming number of students in our country are in the local public school systems. So, he says they are disappointed but feels Connecticut will be somewhat insulated from Washington, as he thinks Trump's agenda is more of a state's rights vision. Waxenberg says though they'll wait and see and will try to work with DeVos.

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - Eileen Healy – Representing Connecticut's Independent Living Centers.

Subject Matter: This week Eileen Healy, representing Connecticut's Independent Living Centers, discussed how Governor Malloy's proposed budget could take away all state funds and be disastrous for these facilities that help the disabled. She told that there are 5 independent living centers in the State of Connecticut and over 300 nationally. Healy explained that they are not residential facilities, despite their title. She says people hear independent living centers and think it's like a nursing facility or assisted living place ... but nobody lives at an independent living center. Healy says what they do is provide people with disabilities of all



February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - (Healy continued) – types and all ages services and supports so that they can live as independently as they choose to in the community. She told for instance, they'll have individuals that come together that are currently in nursing homes and they want to return to the community, and they assist them to get back out. Healy says they help them identify housing, or if the housing needs to be made accessible, or if the person needs personal assistance once they are back in the community. She says they'll help them find a doctor and even help them get back a social life once back into the community. So, Healy says they provide core services like: peer support, independent living skills instruction, information and referral, advocacy, and the transition of both youth and folks in nursing homes back to the community. She says they are in Hartford at Independents Unlimited, in Eastern Connecticut with the Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut, in West Haven which is the Center for Disability Rights, in Stratford with Access Independents, and in Northwest Connecticut with her center, Independents Northwest in Naugatuck.

Eileen Healy told that they fall under the State Department of Rehabilitation Services which is a smaller department and constantly on the chopping block in the state budget. At their height, she says they received 529-thousand dollars from the State of Connecticut, which then went down to 372-thousand, the last time it went down even further to 202-thousand dollars ... and now in Governor Malloy's current budget proposal their funding has been completely eliminated. Healy told that even in the last couple of budgets the governor proposed eliminating their funding, but the legislature put back some funding for them. She says they have had to cut back with these reductions in funding, as they once served 169 towns, now it's down to 25 towns. But she told they have saved the state a lot of money, as over the past 2-years they have brought 233 people out of nursing homes – saving the state about 10-million dollars in Medicaid costs.

Eileen Healy says she can appreciate the fiscal crisis the state is in but feels it would be penny wise and pound foolish to take away all funding for the independent living centers. She says she would love for the legislature to restore their funding to where it was before the cuts of the last few years, but realistically they'd like to get back into the budget. Healy does think the legislature will restore some funding for them because they see the importance independent living centers have in the communities. For those that want to find out more she said go to their website [www.cacil.net](http://www.cacil.net) (Connecticut Assoc. of Centers for Independent Living).

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - Susan Bransfield – Connecticut Conference of Municipalities President, Portland First Selectwoman.

Subject Matter: On this week's show the President of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities Susan Bransfield discussed some of Governor Dannel Malloy's proposed changes that would impact cities and towns. One of the governor's proposals would change the Education Cost Sharing Formula for distribution of education funding to cities and towns. His plan would shift more funding to poorer cities and away from richer towns. Susan Bransfield, President of CCM, told that the governor cited there was a court decision recently that said Connecticut needs to change the way school funding is distributed in the state. She says it opens up a dialogue on the issue as she told every child deserves a good education, whether they are being raised in a city or a suburban, rural environment. Bransfield says how they deliver that and the local towns partner to produce good education for our children is what they need to revisit and look at. So, she says she welcomes the opportunity to look at the education cost formula to how the changes the governor has proposed will work. Although she stated that to pick winners and losers for the funding is something CCM would rather not do, as they want to see everyone win.

CCM President Susan Bransfield told as far as education funding and other important issues go, CCM came out with a report called "A New Way Forward," which looks into how they can improve revenue, cost containment, as well as service sharing in Connecticut. She says that education is one of those services. Bransfield says their leader met with an expert in finance from Brigham Young University, and after 9 months put together this report of what they feel needs to be done ... and not done the same old way. Bransfield told it is a 3-pronged approach to the challenges that Connecticut faces. She says the first is revenue diversification, cost containment to make sure they are not overspending in any one or two areas in their communities, and 3<sup>rd</sup> how do cities and towns share their services. In other words, finding better ways to do things Bransfield says that are service based for cities and towns, whether it's dispatching services, information technology, or healthcare services. She told they are exploring if there are ways where they can help one another.

CCM President Susan Bransfield explained that the cost of doing business is being pushed down to the cities and towns, and the only way that cities and towns can really raise revenue is through the local property tax. She says property taxes



March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - (Bransfield continued) – are high in Connecticut, and that needs to be addressed by diversifying their revenues. Bransfield told that one way would be to take a look at and study whether or not a sharing of sales tax could be available to communities so that they are not as reliant on the property tax. So, CCM feels another way of generating revenue for communities is needed and Bransfield says they are proposing a statewide local sales tax of 1%. She says other states do this and Connecticut needs to as well to keep people and businesses. Bransfield says for too many years they've relied on the local property tax and diversification is needed.

Another big concern of CCM is Governor Malloy's proposal to have cities and towns pay a third of teacher retirement pension costs. CCM President Susan Bransfield told that it's a billion dollars over the 2-year budget, and she says a half a billion dollars on cities and towns is a colossal change. She says it merits discussion, but to put that burden on cities and towns in a short window is extremely difficult, if not impossible to perform.

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - Michael Lawlor - Criminal Justice Policy Advisor to Governor Dannel Malloy.

Subject Matter: On this show Michael Lawlor, Governor Dannel Malloy's Criminal Justice Policy Advisor, discussed the governor's proposal to grant juvenile justice protections to young people aged 18 to 20. Lawlor explained that this would be for crimes that are not serious in nature. He says it would not be for crimes like murder, arsons, assaults, robberies, or burglaries. Lawlor says those cases would be transferred to adult courts anyway. He says the governor would like to see this for lesser crimes like for drugs or opiate addiction, or a young person just acting out. Lawlor says the vast majority of these cases result in either the charges being dropped or participation in a treatment or diversionary program that results ultimately in a dismissal or a sentence of probation. He says you can still do all that using juvenile rules for 18-to-20-year olds and the governor would like to see this put in place over a 2-year period.

Michael Lawlor explained that going to juvenile rules is much better for young persons because their name doesn't get released. He says their name won't be in the paper and doesn't end up in a google search which could hurt them down the line trying to get into college, trying to get housing, or getting a job in the future. Lawlor says young people really don't reach maturity until the age of about

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - (Lawlor continued) - twenty-five. He says this is the best way to give them a chance to be successful in life and not be tarnished for life. Lawlor says it is a kin to expelling kids from school ... while you may punish them, it most times hurts society in the long run because they then have no education, and commit crimes going forward.

Michael Lawlor explained that 16 and 17 year olds were added to the juvenile court system about 10-years ago, and the number of reported crimes in Connecticut is now the lowest it has been since 1967. Lawlor says the violent crime rate in Connecticut has dropped more than any other state in the last 3-years. He says in fact the prison population is down 26% and because of that the state is closing prisons because of less crime. Of course, he says other factors go into crime being down. Lawlor says police are doing a better job with community policing, which creates more trust between police and the community. He told that technology is also a huge reason in deterring crimes in this day and age, with video surveillance cameras all over the place in cities and towns, plus citizens themselves having home surveillance cameras, and almost anyone can record with a cellphone these days. Lawlor says advancements in DNA technology have also made it possible to figure out who did it in most cases. So, all of these are deterrents to crime.

March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - Mae Flexer – Danielson State Senator, Democrat.

Subject Matter: On this show Danielson State Senator Mae Flexer discussed her proposal to raise the age where one can legally buy tobacco products from age 18 to 21. She told that most people who start smoking begin before the age of 18. So, Flexer feels if they can limit the access that teenagers have to tobacco products it can dramatically decrease the number of young people in our state who ever start smoking. She says that will eliminate from a lot of young people the tremendous health risks that are attributed to smoking which can catch up to them later in life. Senator Flexer is hopeful that Connecticut will join a few other states in raising the age to 21 to purchase tobacco products. Now with the state in another big budget deficit, she was asked on the show if there's any concern of decreased revenue for the state from raising the age. Senator Flexer says there have been some who have raised that concern, but she told the State of Connecticut should not be dependent on revenue from a product that kills our young people and should be doing everything it can to make sure they don't smoke. Senator Flexer explained that



March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - (Flexer continued) - that going forward if her bill is passed, it will actually save hundreds of millions of dollars in future healthcare costs with less people ever having taken up smoking and never getting the enormous health problems from smoking in life. She says that's why it's prudent to think about the long-term health savings and not about losing short-term revenue from tobacco sales. Flexer says that's why they've had such strong support from the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association, who have all come forward hoping Connecticut will pass her legislation and help the long-term health of our young people to not get their diseases caused by smoking.

Another bill Senator Mae Flexer is supporting would award the state's 7 electoral votes to the winner of the popular vote for President. She says twice in her lifetime now the winner of the popular vote for President of the United States has ultimately not been the person elected President because of the Electoral College system in our country. Flexer feels the Electoral College is a relic of a bygone era and has twice disenfranchised people in recent years of their vote. It happened with Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton and with George W. Bush and Al Gore. She says this legislation would have Connecticut enter a National Popular Vote Compact, pledging that Connecticut's 7 electoral votes would go to the candidate that won the popular vote.

Senator Mae Flexer also discussed her support for legislation to protect healthcare for women. She says they want to make sure, regardless of what happens in Washington with the Affordable Health Care Act, that in any kind of healthcare plan that free access to contraception is still covered in Connecticut, and in addition well visits, breast cancer screenings, other preventable screenings, and that there's no gender discrimination in costs ... which used to happen before the ACA.

Another bill that Senator Flexer is full steam in support of is for a paid family and medical leave law in Connecticut. She says this will allow a person to be paid when they need a leave of absence for a medical crisis for them or a loved one and need to be there to care for their family. But she also says it could be for a time of joy as well when they are welcoming a new child into their home. Right now the state does have an unpaid family and medical leave law ... but most people cannot afford to take several weeks off from work and continue to pay bills. She says it's the right thing to do.

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Senator Mae Flexer also told on the show that she's working with the Judiciary Committee to change the state law concerning the statute of limitations for sexual assault crimes. She told currently Connecticut has one of the shortest statute of limitations in the country at 5-years, which means you cannot prosecute someone for a sexual assault crime after the window of 5-years. She says especially with new DNA evidence coming into play these days that should be changed. Flexer says a good example of this on the national side is the alleged terrible sexual assault crimes committed by Bill Cosby, but can't be prosecuted in most jurisdictions because the statute of limitations has run out. Sen Flexer says it's really important for Connecticut to adjust its statute of limitations for these crimes so no one slips through the cracks and continues to commit more sexual assaults.

March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - Len Fasano – State Senate Republican President from North Haven.

Subject Matter: On this week's show State Senate Republican President Len Fasano discussed the difficult road ahead of trying to get a budget for the State of Connecticut and close the huge budget deficit. Just this past week Democratic Governor Dannel Malloy held a meeting with reporters to restate his budget proposals and defend his budget. But Senate Republican President Fasano says the governor's budget was not met with welcoming arms by either party. He told that Democrats don't like his budget any more than Republicans do.

GOP Senate Leader Fasano explained that Governor Malloy's budget proposes seismic shifts to municipal funding and educational funding, which transcends party lines. He told the governor wants a redistribution of educational funding to cities and towns, giving more money to poorer cities and towns and taking it away from wealthier towns. Fasano says though in the governor's plan there will only be about 30 winners and the rest of the towns will lose money. He also explained the governor wants cities and towns to start paying a third of teacher pension costs ... after the state has always paid for them. Fasano says that Governor Malloy doesn't want a budget with gimmicks, but it's a little hypocritical in that maybe he doesn't want other people's gimmicks with new tax increases ... only his own gimmicks. Fasano says in this case the governor wanting towns and cities to pay a third of teacher pension costs will end up being a tax increase for