

WAXB FOURTH 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
(October, November, December)

October 4th, 2015 - Joe DeLong - Executive Director of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

Subject Matter: On this Dialogue edition Joe DeLong, Executive Director of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, discussed the battle for the needed state budget money for cities and towns. There had just been a rescission to the state budget affecting local municipalities, due to less money coming into the state coffers because of turmoil in the stock market. DeLong told on the show that the main struggle for municipalities is that their budgets are already set. He says it's always difficult when you have things that impact the budget after your budget is already in place. He says though what is probably even more frustrating to the municipalities is the fact that the rescissions were based off of the legislature defining that there would be 20-million dollars in savings identified through findings of a commission. So DeLong says these rescissions essentially weren't supposed to have any impact, as they were supposed to come after these savings had already been identified. But DeLong told there hasn't been one penny in savings ... so since they never materialized, these rescissions are just straight cuts in the middle of a budget year.

Joe DeLong, CCM Executive Director, says these budget rescissions certainly present challenges for local municipal governments. He told that citizens need to understand that in the end every impact at some point or another trickles down to the property tax and the mill rate. So DeLong says maybe the state is saving some money, but citizens are going to lose services ... in many cases vital services like maintenance of roads, public safety, or in education. On the other hand he says if those cuts are not made at the municipal level ... and in many cases they can't be ... then those have to be funded in some way and that is typically translated in higher property taxes.

CCM Executive Director Joe DeLong says it is very difficult for local municipal leaders because they are doing their budgets based off of what they believe the state budget is going to be. He says they try to hold off as much as they can, but in some cases based off of town charters their budgets are actually due before the final state budget is in place. DeLong says they set their budgets off of

October 4th, 2015 - (DeLong continued) - the governor's proposed budget. He says the big problem is when the state budget is in place and then after that additional cuts come, sending local municipalities scrambling because the money has to come from somewhere.

Joe DeLong also emphasized on the show that local government leaders are very cognizant about efficiencies and cost savings in responsible government. So he says a lot of times there is not a whole lot of room to trim the fat in their budgets ... because there is no fat to cut. So DeLong says there is a level of frustration when the state budget on the other hand has increased expenditures by 3 billion dollars since 2008. He says they'd like to see local governments become more like partners in governing with state leaders, as opposed to having initiatives pushed downhill on them like trying to find more efficiencies in their local budgets when they've already been cut to the bone. DeLong says if the state doesn't get its financial house in better order, more pain could be pushed down on the local communities. He says the state often times over-extends on expenditures creating problems.

One thing CCM Executive Director Joe DeLong told that local communities are trying to do more and more to save money is sharing things regionally. He says town and cities in many cases work together to share resources in healthcare services, transportation, education, and public safety. DeLong says with regionalization local towns and cities pool their resources for the greater good of the area. He says they want vibrant communities where people can live and grow their families.

October 11th, 2015 - Kevin Lembo - State Comptroller.

Subject Matter: On this show State Comptroller Kevin Lembo discussed the State of Connecticut's fiscal situation. He told that the fiscal year in review for 2015 was just completed and the State of Connecticut closed the year with a roughly 113-million dollar budget deficit. Lembo says dollars to pay that off will come out of the rainy day fund. Unfortunately he told that takes the rainy day fund balance down into the 400 million dollar range, which is only about 2.2% of the total budget. So Lembo says the state is in an area again where it is lacking reserves necessary to effectively operate the government. That's why he told he came up with a proposal that passed in the last legislative session that proposes the state beef up the rainy day fund in good times ... so that the extra revenue can be used

October 11th, 2015 - (Lembo continued) - when the economy has a downturn. Lembo says it's in everyone's best interest to stabilize this with budget discipline.

State Comptroller Kevin Lembo says one of the problems right now with revenues coming into the state lower is withholdings from people's paychecks lower ... even as they go back into the workforce and off the unemployment lines. He says this is really the bread and butter of receipts for state government on a paycheck by paycheck basis. Lembo says the problem is companies that laid folks off are bringing them back, but at lower wages.

With a budget deficit Governor Dannel Malloy suggested that cuts be made to funds to hospitals and social service programs. Kevin Lembo was outspoken saying that was the wrong thing to do. He told on the show that he respectfully disagreed with the governor, which sometimes happens when you're grappling with big issues ... and this is a big issue. Lembo told that the impact of those cuts need to be calculated and he doesn't feel that cuts to hospitals, cuts to nonprofits, and cuts to municipalities would be good going downstream (as he put it).

Connecticut has been in budget crisis mode for a number of budget cycles now, but State Comptroller Kevin Lembo doesn't think this is the new normal. He says there is every indication that Connecticut's economy is strengthening. Lembo told that frankly he couldn't do this job if he came to work every day thinking that it was all downhill from here. So he feels there is reason to be hopeful ... but not irrationally optimistic. Lembo says the way Connecticut weathers this is to plan, figure out where we want to be 10 and 20 years from now ... which state government hasn't been very good at. He says there is real opportunity to redo the way state government does work in a way that is more efficient and therefore less expensive. Lembo says to think any one person has all the answers is a mistake as you always have to approach this in a spirit of working together.

Another issue that State Comptroller Kevin Lembo has big concerns about is gigantic spike hikes for some specialty drugs. Recently the price of a drug that's used to fight infections went up 5-thousand percent virtually overnight because a company bought the rights to that drug and jacked up the price. This created such a sensation the company said they would lower the price some. Lembo says the problem is that hedge fund guys and others are coming in and buying the drug patents and setting up little pharmacy companies and driving the price up to the absolute breaking point. He says they make their money and then dump the patent and move on. But Lembo says people's health and lives are at stake here so he has

October 11th, 2015 - (more Lembo continued) - written a letter to Connecticut's congressional delegation asking them to call for an investigation into this and hold hearings to find solutions for what can be done.

October 18th, 2015 - Doug Schwartz - Director of the Quinnipiac University Poll.

Subject Matter: This week on Dialogue Quinnipiac University Poll Director Doug Schwartz discussed some new polls they had just done. One of the polls was done on Governor Dannel Malloy. Schwartz told that it was pretty much across the board bad poll numbers for Governor Malloy. He says the one thing that people most focus on in their poll is the overall job performance, and Malloy gets his lowest number ever at 32%. Schwartz told that's the lowest a governor has been since former Governor John Rowland was going through his corruption scandal and impeachment procedure while in office before being forced to resign. Rowland had gotten as low as 24% told Schwartz. The Q-Poll director says however that current Governor Malloy has never really been too popular, having never gotten over 50% in job approval polls with the voters. Schwartz says Malloy dropped 11 points from their earlier poll in March. He feels it's all about the economy, with voters grading the governor poorly on his handling of the budget, taxes, and jobs. Q-Poll Director Schwartz says even though things aren't as bad as when we went through the recession, people in Connecticut still aren't feeling the improved economy. Schwartz says they asked voters to rate the condition of Connecticut's economy and 3-quarters told them it's in bad shape, only 10% feel it's getting better, while over 40% said it is getting worse. So he says people in Connecticut are not happy with the economy and feel Governor Malloy is taking the state in an even worse direction by his policies.

In the past even though Governor Malloy's job approval ratings weren't very high, he used to get good marks when voters were asked about his personal qualities like leadership, honesty, and empathy with the voters ... not anymore. Q-Poll Director Doug Schwartz says that was pretty striking as Malloy did get positive ratings in the past for his personal qualities like leadership and honesty. So this is the first poll where those numbers have taken a dive where he's now viewed negatively in those categories. One of the things the governor told voters in the last election was he wasn't going to raise taxes ... and while he didn't propose new taxes in his budget, the budget Democrats pushed through the

October 18th, 2015 - (Schwartz continued) - legislature and Malloy signed off on, did produce new taxes. Schwartz says he suspects that is part of the reason why we are now seeing a plurality of voters saying the governor is not honest and trustworthy.

For his part Governor Malloy says he really doesn't respond to polls ... but told that he's doing the hard tough things in the state and maybe that is rubbing people the wrong way. However he says he is doing the things that need to be done for Connecticut's future. Doug Schwartz responded by saying that he wasn't going to speculate on the governor's motives, but that it is kind of obvious that people don't like higher taxes, don't like cuts in services, and the headlines where important businesses in Connecticut have considered moving out because of the state budget. He says there has been a lot of negative economic news, so it's not surprising that most voters are not feeling very good about the way Governor Malloy is doing his job. Schwartz says this could reduce his political power in swaying legislators in public policy.

Meanwhile in their poll, Q-Poll Director Doug Schwartz told that one person who the voters really like is Connecticut U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal who has a 62% job approval rating. He says Connecticut voters feel Blumenthal is a strong leader and is honest and trustworthy. Blumenthal will be running for another U.S. Senate term next year.

Also next year of course is the Presidential election. In Connecticut Schwartz told that on the Democratic side Hillary Clinton is the frontrunner at 37%, but that's down from the previous poll in March when she was at 53%. Bernie Sanders comes in second at 25%. On the GOP side Donald Trump leads the pack at 34% with people feeling he has strong leadership qualities. Schwartz says voters like that Trump is anti-establishment too. In second place amongst the Republican contenders is Dr. Ben Carson, another outsider.

October 25th, 2015 - Andres Ayala - Department of Motor Vehicles
Commissioner.

Subject Matter: On this show State Motor Vehicles Commissioner Andres Ayala discussed the major Department of Motor Vehicles computer upgrade that shut down branch offices for a week. Commissioner Ayala told that the DMV had been running on a computer system that was between 45 and 50 years old ... so it was old and the upgrade was certainly needed. But he told it was a major upgrade changing over the entire system, hence the need to close branch offices in order to accomplish it. Ayala says it was a major undertaking with a lot of planning as it involved the transferring of over 40-million pieces of data into the new system.

Commissioner Andres Ayala says the transfer to the new computer system went fairly well. However he says they knew that after being closed for a week ... when they opened the following Tuesday there would be long lines (even though 60 day extensions were granted on some renewals). Ayala says even when they are closed for just a holiday weekend, when the DMV reopens they are always swamped. So after reopening following the computer upgrade there were very long lines, the likes of which had never been seen before. And it was slow going because DMV workers had to get up to speed in using the new computer system.

DMV Commissioner Ayala told with the new system upgrade there are now new services online that give people the opportunity to not even have to come to the DMV anymore ... they can do it online. He says they now have an enhanced registration renewal that can be done online, which is probably the most used service that they have. But there are also some completely new services with the computer upgrade. One is the opportunity to check for compliance issues. Ayala explained that State of Connecticut law states that a person cannot register a motor vehicle if you have some compliance issues. He told that the major compliance issue is property taxes. If you haven't paid your automobile tax you are not going to be able to register your motor vehicle in the State of Connecticut Ayala told. Now by going online people can check to see if they owe property taxes or owe any kind of parking infraction that would also not allow a person to register their vehicle. Another thing Commissioner Ayala says you can now check online is the emissions status of your vehicle, which also needs to be in compliance to register your vehicle. So he says now you can check these things online and get them in order if need be to register your vehicle. Another online service Commissioner Ayala told they have now is you can cancel your plates online. On the other hand

October 25th, 2015 - (Ayala continued) - he says you can also order vanity license plates online. Ayala told that if for whatever reason someone loses their registration, they can print off a copy of that registration online for a fee. So now he says for many things you no longer have to show up in person at a Motor Vehicles branch, you can stay out of those lines by doing it online at whatever time is convenient for you. Commissioner Ayala says they want to get the word out about being able to do these things online because about 35% of people who show up at DMV branches to do something don't really have to be there, as they could accomplish those things online from their own computer or smartphone.

Also on the show Connecticut DMV Commissioner Andres Ayala talked about the state's tough graduated driver's license program for 16 and 17 year olds. He says Connecticut has bucked the national average with teen driver deaths because of the restrictions of the graduated driver's license program which limits when these teens can drive and who can be in the vehicle with them. Ayala says while teen driver deaths are up nationwide, that's not the case in Connecticut as the state's tough teen driving laws are going a long way to keeping them safer on the roads.

November 1st, 2015 - Nancy Boone - Director of the Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs.

Subject Matter: This week on Dialogue Nancy Boone, Director of the Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs, discussed why her group is warning that the push for spending cuts to end the state deficit crisis could harm programs vital to the poor and disabled. She told that year after year it seems the first place the governor and legislative leaders go when there's a budget issue is to human service programs. Ms. Boone says many of these have just been flat funded for the last two decades ... which is shortsighted to not fund programs that help people. She says often times this leads to people being forced to choose between things like escaping from violence, getting the medication they need to prevent long-term illness, and paying their rent.

Nancy Boone says the governor and legislature need to look at the people in Connecticut as the core to the state. She told that just as we need safe roads to travel on, we need services that help people get where they are going ... as they both have the same purpose. Boone says we need to stop thinking short-term and reacting to every crisis. She says we need to have a strategic plan to move the state

November 1st, 2015 - (Boone continued) - forward, not just in its infrastructure and education ... but in its people, which is its biggest commodity. Boone feels that every time there's an attempt to balance a budget and make cuts that social services always seem to be on the table because poor people don't have political capital and in many cases don't vote and don't make a lot of noise.

Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs Director Nancy Boone says they know that it ultimately costs the state money if funding for early childhood education or for affordable housing are cut or flatlined. She says when this occurs people are just surviving instead of thriving. Boone says 10 years from now that will affect our income, the state's productivity, what the state can give back in taxes, and what people can spend at businesses. So she says leaders need to stop thinking in terms of what can we do right now to save money, but instead think about what can we do to have a healthy population 5 to 10 years from now, so that people can work and contribute. Boone says it is callus ... whether it be the governor or other legislative leaders ... to not provide nutrition, housing, and medication to people. She says that's fiscally a bad idea and very shortsighted to cut services to people because it costs us more in the long run. Boone says they feel even if taxes are needed to accomplish this then that is the way to go, rather than have lawmakers and the governor cut vital social service programs that help the poor and others. She says the State of Connecticut needs to reprioritize and provide those dollars going forward in order to have an educated, healthy population.

November 8th, 2015 - Brendan Sharkey - State House Speaker (D) from Hamden.

Subject Matter: On this week's show State Democratic House Speaker Brendan Sharkey discussed the state's budget deficit challenge. Once again Connecticut is running a budget deficit post-recession. The recession began in 2008 and 7 years past that the State of Connecticut is continually struggling with budget deficits, even though one would think that recovery should be taking place. Speaker Sharkey told that the state will be in perpetual deficit threats unless it changes the way it does budgeting post-recession. He says they need to do more of a performance based approach to budgeting at the state level for all of their state departments. The other thing Speaker Sharkey wants to see is the state requiring those same efficiencies at the local level from cities and towns and boards of

November 8th, 2015 - (Sharkey continued) - education. He says they continue to run operations as if we lived in the 1700's, duplicating services and costs. Sharkey says that regionalism should be the norm and at the state level they should be requiring it from cities and towns as the state grants them their funding. He says the state needs to have some performance measures in place to evaluate whether these terms and boards of education are really using the money effectively ... and if not they shouldn't be funding inefficiency.

In dealing with the current budget deficit House Speaker Brendan Sharkey says in the short-term he feels asking for across the board sacrifice from all discretionary lines in the budget is the way to get through it in the short-term in a practical sense. But in the long-term Sharkey says they need to make some tough choices about what is their core mission. He feels funding social services is precisely what state government is designed to do and provide. Sharkey says their core mission is to grow our economy and protect those who need protection. He says those are hard decisions to be made, but the state cannot continue to operate the way it has in the past.

Initially Governor Dannel Malloy proposed cuts to hospitals and programs, which the Democratic leadership told him was not going to fly. Now the governor has invited both Democratic and Republican leadership to the table to figure out how to make up the budget deficit. Sharkey says he is very optimistic that these bipartisan budget deficit talks will reach an agreement.

At the end of the last legislative session the legislature made some controversial changes in business taxes to find revenue to balance the budget. At first when the ideas were floated told House Speaker Brendan Sharkey, there wasn't much of an outcry ... but after they passed many businesses fumed about them, with some even threatening to leave the state like G.E. Speaker Sharkey admits they made a mistake and ended up tweaking those business taxes. As a result the State's Economic Competitiveness Commission was created to get businesses' input on legislative issues and matters pertaining to keeping Connecticut a viable place to do business. Sharkey says unfortunately too often the state's tax policy has not been consistent with the state's economic development messaging, which is "Connecticut is Open for Business." He says that has been a problem for the state, because it's been inconsistent. Sharkey says Connecticut needs to have a better overall policy to encourage businesses to come to the state and also keep businesses already here ... to stay here.

November 8th, 2015 - (more Sharkey continued) -

State House Speaker Brendan Sharkey also commented on the local municipal elections on the show that had just taken place. He told that state Republicans made no bones about acknowledging they were trying to make the elections about their dislike and distrust for Governor Malloy and Democratic policies in the state. Sharkey told that it was an utter failure.

November 15th, 2015 - Lisa Tepper Bates - Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness.

Subject Matter: On this show, Lisa Tepper Bates, Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, discussed their efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut. She told that their Zero 2016 campaign aims to do two important things. Tepper Bates says one is to end all homelessness among veterans and the goal to do that is by the end of this year. The other important goal of the campaign she says is to end what they call chronic homelessness. Tepper Bates explained that these are people who have long been homeless, either in shelters, on the streets, or in the woods, and most likely live with a severe disabling condition. She says their goal with the chronic homeless is to help all of them get housed and get the supports they need to stay housed. Tepper Bates says there are just over a thousand households who are chronically homeless. She says there is a very small number of families with children, but the vast majority of them are single adults. Tepper Bates says they know this because they had a massive effort by providers across the state to get to know by name and by person, everybody experiencing homelessness. So she says they knew exactly who these homeless people are in Connecticut and what they need. Tepper Bates says they'll be working one household at a time to help them get the housing and supports they need.

Now earlier this year the state had declared that it had ended chronic homelessness among veterans. Lisa Tepper Bates told that was a very important milestone for Connecticut. She says we are the first state in the nation to accomplish this with the federal government acknowledging Connecticut for this. Tepper Bates says they housed or put on a path to immediate housing every veteran who had been homeless living with a disability. She explained the way they did that was the same way they are looking at those who are chronically homeless ... and that is by getting to know each homeless veteran, understand

November 15th, 2015 - (Tepper Bates continued) - what they needed, and then help them get housing.

Lisa Tepper Bates told on the show that they had just held a summit in the state on homelessness which Governor Dannel Malloy attended. She says they were honored to have the governor come to the summit and speak about his administration's commitment. She told that it's a matter of record that Governor Malloy has invested more to help end homelessness and address a real shortage in affordable housing ... more than any of the last 3 governors in the state. Tepper Bates says they are really pleased that Governor Malloy is committed to this. She says the governor know that it's the right thing to do and the smart thing to do. Tepper Bates explained that chronically homeless people tend to cycle in and out of hospitals and in and out of prisons. But she told that when you provide housing and supports to someone who has been chronically homeless, it is less expensive than the toll it takes on our public systems with these people cycling in and out. So Tepper Bates says they are streamlining things here in Connecticut with everyone coming together to understand who they are working with, who needs what kind of help, and organizing to help them get housed.

Lisa Tepper Bates says the better their data had gotten on the homeless in Connecticut and they know exactly what's needed where ... the more confident they are that they will meet the goal of ending chronic homelessness in Connecticut. She says it is an ambitious goal to end chronic homelessness, but Tepper Bates told on the show that Connecticut could be the first state in America to do it. She says Connecticut is serving as a model for the rest of the country when it comes to ending homelessness ... because everyone deserves a home. She noted that when they are talking about chronic homelessness, they are talking about people who have been living for a long time on the streets. Tepper Bates says a lot of the time these individuals have severe mental illness. She told that the good thing is when they do their so-called Point-in-Time-Count on a particular day each winter, where they actually go out and count all of the homeless people in Connecticut, the number has been dropping each year. Last year she told that they also did their first ever statewide count of homeless youth. Tepper Bates says they found out that there are about 3-thousand young people under the age of 24 who are homeless in Connecticut ... which is far too many ... so they are trying to address that segment of homeless people too and get them housed and a productive member of society.