The Senate was called to order at 2:32 p.m., the President in the Chair.

THE CHAIR:

Would the Senate please come to order? I've been waiting to do that. And with that, members and guests, would you please take your seats. Members and guests, please taken your seats. And Senator Kissel, it appears that you are the first in the circle ready to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance. So before you sit, sir, if I could call on you to lead us in the pledge. And before, and I'm so glad you're here, Senator, but I would like to call on our Acting Chaplain, Noele R. Kidney of Ellington for the prayer before we do the pledge. Noele, thank you so much for coming.

ACTING CHAPLAIN NOELE R. KIDNEY:

Please bless us with an inner strength so that our lives and our work may be a blessing on others. Amen.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you so much. Senator Kissel, please lead us in the pledge.
SENATOR KISSEL (7TH):

Congratulations, Madam Chair.

(ALL) I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you so much, Senator Kissel for leading us in the Pledge and at this time, I will entertain points of personal privilege and Senator Looney, I understand you have a point of personal privilege.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH):

Thank you. Thank you, Madam President and good afternoon. Madam President, I know that you are here with us today with a heavy heart because of the recent passing of your father. I would like to memorialize Mr. Stanley Bysiewicz briefly and I believe other senators may have comments also. Stanley Bysiewicz passed away on January 13 at the age of 96. He was truly one of the great pillars of what we've come to call the Greatest Generation. Fought in WWII and came home to build a wonderful family life and a career, both as a businessman and a farmer, and was an inspiration to his children and to his neighbors and to his community at large. He was one of six children himself, the child of immigrant Polish parents, graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School, had to walk five-and-a-half miles a day to get there, and proudly served in the U.S. Army Air Corp from 1941 to 1944, was assigned
to a B-24 crew that completed 50 bombing missions in the European Theater. He was training on B-29's for service in the Pacific when the war thankfully ended.

Though merely 24 years old when he was drafted, he received a Purple Heart medal for a shrapnel injury and his wartime experience as a bombardier is recounted in a collection with other WWI Veterans at Ball State University in Indiana. After returning home, he studied accounting at Drexel University, graduating in 1947 with the help of the GI Bill that became the path to higher education for so many hundreds of thousands of WWII vets and veterans since then. He then settled into a career with Nationwide Insurance Company selling all kinds of insurance, trained many young sales agents, left that position as district sales manager to start his own successful insurance agency in Manchester where he worked with his son-in-law, David Donaldson, until he was in his late 80's, so continued very, very active beyond normal retirement age.

A trailblazer in many ways, he also helped organize an agents' union and was passionate about insurance and had an extremely loyal customer base. He was married to the love of his life, Shirley Raissi and she herself was, as we know, a trailblazer, was the first tenured woman law professor at the University of Connecticut. I was proud to be one of her students. She was my teacher in legal writing in my first year of law school. She was a taskmaster and she was an extraordinarily good teacher and it's no wonder that her daughter is a successful attorney also. But he was both a businessman and also maintained the family farm through all those years and raised their children, along with our Lieutenant
Governor, John, Karen and Gayle and of course, we all know is a liaison for the University. And he was of course as well, in addition to being a wonderful father, was a wonderful grandfather and delighted in all of his grandchildren in his aging years so I would just like to commemorate his life as a life well led and a model here in the State of Connecticut and condolences of the Chamber to you Madam President, to all the members of your family, and I would like to yield to Senator Lesser for additional remarks.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Lesser, do you accept the yield?

SENATOR LESSER (9TH):

Yes, Madam President, I do. Madam President, there's not a whole lot I can say that Senator Looney hasn’t already touched upon except to extend the sadness that I think all of us from Middletown feel at this moment in solidarity with you and your family at the loss of your father. He was a pillar of our community and we are proud of his accomplishments as we are proud of yours and so with that, I would like to yield to my good friend, the other half of the Middletown Delegation, Senator Mary Abrams.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Lesser. Senator Abrams, do you accept the yield?

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH):
I do. Madam President, I just want to say that it's been my pleasure on many occasions to listen to you talk about your family and the values that they instilled in you of hard work and service to others, and I'm sure that they have been exceptionally proud of all you've accomplished, and I think that reading and hearing about your father all these years, it's no surprise to me. And so I offer my condolences to your family and I wish you all the best.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you so much, Senator Abrams. I appreciate it. Any other points of personal privilege? Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE (27TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I also would like to rise to offer my condolences to you and your family on behalf of the passing of your father and I rise in the sense not just for the accomplishments that were just articulated, but being an Air Force veteran, I do have a soft spot for anyone who has served in the military, especially the precursor to the Air Force, the Army Air Corp and I wasn't aware that your father served on as part of a bombardier mission, all those countless missions and for those that may not know, that particular MOS or skill set had the highest mortality rate in WWII, more than infantry. Those that were in those planes went down at a greater rate than just about any other career in the military and the fact that he was able to make it home alive and well and fulfill the American dream as an immigrant, to provide a better life for his family and his children, I'm sure he's very
proud of the heights that you have achieved as well as the rest of your family, and I just wanted to give him the respect that he deserves from a military perspective as well as all of his accomplishments throughout his life so a life well lived and well-earned and my condolences to you. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator, thank you so much. It's kind. Any other points of personal privilege?

UNKNOWN SENATOR:

Madam President. Madam President, if we might acknowledge the passing of Stanley Bysiewicz by members of the Senate standing for a moment of silence.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you all. Any other points of personal privilege? Seeing none, Mr. Clerk, is there any business on the Clerk's desk?

THE CLERK:

The clerk is in possession of Senate Agenda No. 1 dated Tuesday, January 22, 2019.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move all items on Senate Agenda No. 1 dated January 22, 2019 be acted upon as indicated and that the Agenda be incorporated by reference into the Senate Journal and Senate Transcript. Madam President, I ask the Clerk to please call from Senate Agenda No. 1, House Bill 5765.

THE CLERK:

House Bill No. 5765, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE FEDERAL SHUTDOWN AFFECTED EMPLOYEES LOAN PROGRAM AND PROVIDING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

THE CHAIR:

And Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move acceptance of the Emergency Certified Bill and passage of the bill in concurrence with the House. I'd like to now yield to Senator Bergstein.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bergstein, do you accept the yield?

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH):

I do.

THE CHAIR:

Please continue.
SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH):

Thank you. Connecticut is taking the lead on a national issue and showing the country that we can work together. I want to thank Governor Lamont, Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz, and all six legislative leaders of the four caucuses who contributed to and support this bill. This bill is an excellent example of public/private partnerships, which is what we need to use to move our state forward, so I would like to particularly thank the banking community for their civic spirit and their generosity in stepping up to shoulder 90 percent of this bill should anyone default.

As banking committee chair, I applaud the banking community, the credit unions and our state government for working together to resolve an issue that is burdening federal employees through no fault of their own. What this bill does is it provides no interest loans for the lesser of $5000 dollars or the average monthly salary of furloughed employees or unpaid working federal employees so that they can meet their mortgages and they can provide for their families during this period of uncertainty and this is what they need to do and this is what we need to do for them for the approximately 1500 families in Connecticut that are impacted by the federal shutdown. We don’t want them to have to dip into their savings or go bankrupt or take out high-interest loans as a result of something that they did not contribute to. At this point, I would like to yield to my colleague, Senator Kushner. Madam President.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you. Senator Kushner, do you accept the yield:

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I do.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I just wanted to talk a little bit about who the impacted employees would be under this bill. The affected employees are people who have been furloughed so they're not working, those that are working without pay, and those that are furloughed now, but may be returned to work without pay and so we, as Senator Bergstein said, we estimate that to be between 1500 to 2000 people in the State of Connecticut. This is a critical time to assist these families, particularly you know having experienced the weekend cold snap that really impacted so many families without any power or loss of power and these families who are working or not working, but all not being paid, really don’t have the luxury of going to a hotel and escaping the cold and so I think it's extremely urgent that we address this.

The bill is laid out in a way that people would be eligible for, those who are eligible for unemployment would be able to take advantage of employment or the loan or both, but in fact, if you do take unemployment, that would be reduced from the amount of the loan you could receive, so I think
it's a well-structured bill and I'm very proud that our State of Connecticut is acting quickly to address the needs of these working families, and I too want to applaud the leadership of both caucuses and the governor and the lieutenant governor for taking this action so swiftly, and I would yield to Senator Cathy Osten.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Osten, do you accept the yield?

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH):

Yes, Madam President, I do.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH):

Thank you very much. Madam President, in this bill, which has been developed on a bipartisan, bicameral basis, it addresses the issue of those workers who through no fault of their own are not receiving the pay necessary to support their families. We have some 2000 families in Connecticut who need assistance in this manner. This also would allow for deferment of taxes without paying interest at the option of the municipality and I think that that's another thing that we have allowed in this particular piece of legislation. Both Senator Bergstein and Senator Kushner talked about working in a private/public partnership and the leadership of Governor Lamont in this manner is something that
we should look forward to as a way to move our state forward. This issue here, many people talk about mortgages or rent or car payments. For me, it's much more basic than that. It's helping families buy gas for their cars. It's helping families pay for daycare so they don’t lose those slots when they have to remove their children because they cannot pay for them. It's helping families go to the grocery store and put food in their refrigerators. It is those simple things that we sometimes take for granted that people are not being able to afford and it's also allowing us to put oil in our tanks so that we can have a warm home when we get home at the end of a day. It is extremely important for us to look at these workers in a fashion that acknowledges that they have, in many cases, like the federal employees that are in our Danbury Prison System, who go to work each day and are not getting paid. It's an environment that has clear risks in their daily lives, and yet they're willing to go to work and put their lives on the line as many of my colleagues did when I worked in the State Department of Corrections for 21 years.

This is for those who protect our borders, our Coast Guard who looks every day to make sure that we are seeing men and women look to protect people who are out in boats on the waters. They’ve done life safety, public safety. This is something that we need to do as a manner to protect men and women and provide them with the resources to protect their families so they can concentrate on their jobs. I look forward to the passage of this bill. I want to thank everybody who supported this bill. I think it's vitally important that we do this and I think it's quite necessary for us to step up to the plate and I would remind people that there are other
issues that we may be looking at. One, for example, would be to help dairy farmers make ends meet as we move through the process and I look forward to working on that issue in the same fashion. Thank you very much, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Osten, thank you. Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH):

Thank you very much, Madam President. I stand in support of this measure, but I will state at the outset that it is not without some controversy in my district and feel that North Central Connecticut has struggled, the communities that I represent since the onset of the great recession in 2008, and more recently, what we believe is a disproportionate impact on our particular educational system regarding the funds that we have gotten from the State of Connecticut. Somehow, this has been done through certain formulated changes, reductions in pilot funds and so I am hoping that things can be done in a more equitable fashion for the towns in North Central Connecticut in this legislative session. I have heard from folks in my communities both for and opposed to this bill and those opposed are primarily concerned with the fact that they believe we're picking winners and losers. They may have been out looking for a job for several months. They are in a similar situation to the folks that we want to help with this bill and that's the cause for their concern. They also don't want it to be used for some sort of a political punching bag and they clearly believe that there's problems in Washington
and that those issues should be directed towards our congressional delegation.

That being said, I have an international airport in my district, very proud of Bradley International Airport and dozens of TSA officials and folks involved in various federal law enforcement capacities throughout the seven towns that I represent. Some of those folks may live up the road in the Commonwealth, some of them may live south of my district, but I am certainly sure that many dozens of those folks in and around the airport which secures our safety and travel, but also protects our state as being a gateway for terrorist activities, I'm sure that many, many of those folks work and live in my district, live in my district. The other point, and I want to underscore what Senator Osten said is that you know there was a time when I was looking for a job and if you go two, three months without the combined income that you had relied upon to pay your bills, you end up robbing Peter to pay Paul and it gets very, very serious very quickly. We need only pick up the newspaper every couple of weeks to read that so many of our neighbors and friends and colleagues have very small amounts of lifetime savings and there's many, many folks in this great rich state of Connecticut that live paycheck to paycheck. It's not an inexpensive state to live in. When you look at the wealth in Fairfield County and then average it into the other counties in the State of Connecticut, we're just not all living in great wealth and it's a struggle and so I feel for any individual who's compelled to go to work and doesn't get paid or is at home not receiving a paycheck, but due to the restrictions of their employment, they cannot collect unemployment or they're not free to
really go out and look for another job unless they give up a job that may have many, many years of seniority in and they enjoy doing that job and they want to get back to work and once you go a couple cycles without a paycheck, especially if you're the primary income earner in that particular household, bad things can happen very quickly. You don't want to fall behind on a mortgage and have the foreclosure proceedings beginning. Talk about something that is incredibly stressful, but you also don't want to make choices between medication or food on the table or paying for healthcare bills for maybe your children or your elderly parents. So this can turn into a cascade very, very quickly and I'm excited that the first major proposal that we have in this legislative session is a public/private partnership. To the extent we can leverage all the great corporate entities and citizens and small businesses out there in our great state, we will be able to do far more for far more many people that we can just trying to do it alone as a state government.

So I recognize the concerns of my constituents to the north of us. I definitely understand that we don't want to be picking any winners and losers, but I recognize that this particular category of individuals is in a very unique situation, sui generis and they need this hand up, it's not a handout, it's an interest-free loan that they will be compelled to pay back, but they need it to bridge them from this position of peril into the future where hopefully, the stalemate in Washington will resolve sooner rather than later. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Kissel. Senator Sampson.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH):

Good afternoon, Madam President. Delighted to be in the Chamber this afternoon with my colleagues. It's pretty clear from watching the result in the House and kind of speaking with some of my colleagues here that it's a foregone conclusion that this is going to pass and become our law in the state, but I do think it's important to just state a few things for the record, and my comments are going to be centered around the role of our State Government. Something that my House colleagues downstairs are very used to hearing me speak on and I'm quite certain before the end of the session, I will speak on it a few times.

The first thing I want to state is that I am extraordinarily sympathetic to this population that is an issue with the bill before is. Certainly no one wants to be in a position working for any employer where they're not being compensated on time and properly for the work that they're doing. The question really comes down to whether or not that responsibility falls to this body to do something about it.

My first concern is that I heard a great many questions go unanswered in the House about the actual process. There were a couple of issues, first and foremost, I'll note that this bill is being E-certified which implies that it is an emergency to the State of Connecticut, and while I certainly acknowledge it might be an emergency to some households in the State of Connecticut, there are many emergencies going on. People have flooded
basements and cars that slid off their driveway because of the ice, but this is not an issue that is an emergency to the State of Connecticut, that we needed to come in here today to pass this law. It should’ve gone through the proper legislative process with a public hearing, with the opportunity for public comment so people can understand the ramifications of what we do here.

Just a couple of those questions that I heard were unanswered, and the most one I think is essentially what the State's responsibility is. The bill is pretty clear that it says that our responsibility ends at 10 percent, but there are still some questions about what happens after that responsibility is met. Do we just automatically turn the potential default over to the financial institutions who have agreed to offer these loans? Will the Continue Housing Finance Authority still have to play a role in collecting those funds. What exactly is the role of our State Government, the CFHA, and to what expense to the taxpayers of Connecticut merely just for the processing let alone the collection of any debt. Another question that was asked downstairs is the priority of debt. If you’ve ever got a home mortgage loan, you know that the responsibility falls after the responsibility of the real estate taxes. When someone is foreclosed upon or they go into bankruptcy, that kind of thing, there is an order in which people have to be paid off and I saw this question asked a couple of times in the House and there was no answer to whether or not the responsibility to pay back this loan would come before the real estate taxes that might be owed by this person or whether or not the unemployment compensation payments that are required to be paid back under this bill have to be paid back first. I
think it's important that we answer these questions before we pass things into law and that is the reason why we have a legislative process, that is the reason why we have committees and I am a firm believer that this process has value and we should follow it.

My second concern about this particular proposal is that we've never done this before. There's been several other federal government shutdowns. One of my colleagues mentioned back in 1991 there was a rift which essentially is the federal government employees after furloughing them and at that point, we still never did that and I'm curious to know why we would be doing it now. Many folks have talked about why we're choosing this population to bail out. There are certainly other people in our state that are acting in good faith, who are working hard and for whatever reason their employers fail to pay them and so on, but we have not included them in this legislation. There was an amendment offered in the House downstairs which I think was the best possible solution, and I'm a little disappointed that it failed, but I will note that it failed very, very narrowly. I don't know what the exact vote was, but I believe there were 88 yeses which is nearly half the chamber down there. Basically, that amendment kept everything we're attempting to do here intact except removed the very, very small involvement of the State of Connecticut. My understanding is that this proposal came to us because some people in the private sector want to help and I'm hearing it all over the place. There are news reports every day. I saw that if you are a furloughed federal employee who is not being paid, you can get free dog food. There are people out there trying to help and I believe that there are
financial institutions that would help, and I believe that even without our involvement and our agreement under this bill, to take care of 10 percent of the potential default, which I think we all agree is actually extremely unlikely because we're talking about people who the President has already agreed to pay, and the fact that they're probably better off federal employees than the average population. I doubt that there's going to be much in the way of default on these loans, so my concern is not so much that they're going to default, it's the principal of whether or not this body has the right to commit the taxpayers of the State of Connecticut to any amount to pay for payments that are not the State's responsibility.

These are federal employees. We have enough issue taking care of our own obligations regarding State employees and making sure that those items are met. At the end of the day, Madam President, I'm going to vote not today and it's not because I don't want to help these folks. In fact, I'm very pleased that ultimately they are going to be helped, but I would argue that we didn't need it to do, we didn't need to do it this way. If we simply enabled Webster Bank and others to go forward with this process without guaranteeing any part of it or involving the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, then they would do it anyway and to me, that's the best way to do things is when we are not interjecting ourselves or inserting ourselves into that process. I just cannot commit the constituents that I represent to any amount, whether it's like or not, for this purpose. Thank you, Madam President.
Senator, thank you. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I just, you know I listened very closely to what you said Senator Sampson and I think if we characterize this as a bail out, we're making a real mistake because as you yourself said, there are a lot, these employees are guaranteed to get repaid, that was a bill that was passed in Congress that when they go back to work, they will be paid their back pay and so as you mentioned, there's not going to be a default and I think the idea that was expressed about a handing, you know giving people a hand up by Senator Osten is really the way to look at it because you know this is something that we're really certain that most people are going to be able to pay these loans back and it's also a critical time to act. You know the idea that we would sit in committees and listen to testimony, all that time, people won't be able to pay their bills, won't be able to put food on the table. You know they're really suffering right now and I think it's way too dangerous to allow this to continue.

Other states are taking action in different ways, but what I like about this bill is the way it's structured, as a loan, interest-free loan, and that we know we're going to get paid back that money. I think it's a really good approach so I intend to vote in favor of this bill. I'm very proud of our state that we're taking action quickly to address the needs of this population. So in terms of the priority of debit, it is clear from the bill that people will be required to pay back both unemployment and also the loan and I think as in
many cases, we have the responsibility to pay back debt and pay back bills and we make a decision how we do that best. In this particular bill, the loans are spelled out how quickly they have to be paid back and what kind of payment so I think it's pretty well protected that the loans will be paid back by people and this is, we're not taking much risk as the State of Connecticut. As was said earlier, the banks are taking on the greatest portion of this risk. I'm very proud of our state that we will take this measure and this effort to help families, working families right now, right away. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator, thank you. Will you remark further?
Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS (4TH):

Good afternoon, Madam President. It's great to see you up there today. I just want to say that when this topic first came to my attention, I happened to be sitting home on the couch watching the news and I saw Governor Lamont and Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz and the media folks there and they were interviewing so I turned the TV up because I didn’t know what they were talking about at the time, and that's when the program first came to my attention, was to help those government employees who are working and receiving no compensation or are furloughed with the inability to go back to work or obtain any other form of compensation and to me, what a noble first act to work on behalf of the residents who felt they were caught in a situation that was beyond their control and the Governor
reaching out to the private sector to form, as those previous speakers had said, a public/private partnership to address some of the issues you know facing our state, and I thought to myself maybe this is just the beginning where we're dealing with a temporary personal crisis that would evolve into dealing with the long-term financial crisis of the state that we seek more public/private partnerships to address those concerns. I became very enthusiastic about staying to the very end of the newscast and watching. Sometimes I flip the channel off and I say I've heard enough, I know I'll be hearing about it later on, but it really captured my attention, the whole 5 or 6 minutes it was on the news, and then you know I started to, my children asked me, well what was that all about, Dad? And I said it's about pride to simplify it. I said these are folks that beyond circumstances of their own, they get up and they go to work every day because they know that the work that they do affects others in our state.

Imagine going to, as Senator Kissel had mentioned in his district, Bradley International Airport and you're told there's not flights today because nobody from TSA showed up. The airport's closed. How that would affect not only our personal plans, but our economy where folks cannot attend business meetings in other states or we may have visitors that want to relocate their business to the State of Connecticut and they know that they can't come here because they may not be able to get back home. It's role modeling for the children to see well mom or dad or aunt or uncle or grammy and grampy are not getting paid. They're getting up and they're doing what they have to do because it's expected of them. It's one of the commitments they’ve made when they
accepted this job with this employer, that they're going to come to work every day and they're fulfilling their commitment to their employer and ultimately, that affects all those around us.

And then I said to myself, well, the extension of this bill is for a three-month period potentially, and the maximum that an individual could gain through this program is $15,000 dollars; $15,000 dollars to cover three months' worth of bills. I sat at home and I kind of added up what my monthly expenses were and I'd be relying on my credit cards to fill those gaps and imagine if we didn’t have the income to offset those credit charges. It exasperates itself because our credit rating goes down which means our borrowing capacity costs more money so this is a temporary fix until they figure out things in Washington, but we've figured out things here in Connecticut. I think we're doing right by all the citizens, by those that are uniquely affected, and I'm asking the Chamber's support as we vote in favor of this bill today.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Duff, will you remark?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Yes, I do, and I urge my colleagues to support the Emergency Certified Bill. As we've known and everybody in the circles realizes, we see federal employees now who are going to be missing their second paycheck this coming Friday. Nobody, unfortunately, expects the government to open over the next few days or have a
deal reached this evening in order to get that check, so our federal employees, many of whom are working, going in, doing their jobs each and every day, are working for free and that puts a tremendous amount of stress not only on themselves, but on their families as well. You’ve got families who, as somebody said earlier, live paycheck to paycheck with very little savings and so therefore, they don’t have the ability to dip into a wealth of savings that maybe other families have so they have to then make choices between the food on the table or paying the mortgage or paying the rent, maybe paying for prescription drugs. On the radio this morning, I heard that a family out in Ohio would have to make some real difficult choices about their son, who is severely autistic, because they don’t have the money right now because their savings is going to be depleted to continue on with his services.

These are real things that are happening to real people in our country and so I am very gratified to see that the four caucuses and the Governor’s office and the Lieutenant Governor have come together in a bipartisan way to try and figure out a solution the best that we can here in the State of Connecticut, and while it may not be the best solution that will help them in the way that they would ultimately want, which is to get back to work and get paid for the jobs that they're doing, we have come up with a solution, a creative solution in order to help people not have to make those difficult choices whether it's their mortgage or their rent or their food or putting gas in the car or maybe helping their children with a new pair of sneakers. So this bill today, this Emergency Certified Bill, which passed in the House overwhelmingly, is very, very
important to our citizens and those who are going to be affected by this because Connecticut is a state with a heart. We do have a heart. We do want to make sure that we are helping our neighbors at a time when they need the help. There may only be 1500 or 2000 employees who are affected, but each one of those families is very, very important to all of us here in the State of Connecticut.

Madam President, I also want to take an opportunity to thank the bankers who have stepped up to the plate in a big way, who have worked hard to come up with solutions, and again, thank the staff who have worked on putting this together. I want to certainly thank Senator Bergstein and Senator Kushner and especially Senator Osten who brought this idea up long before anybody else did, and I would certainly hope that this bill would be considered a model for other states to take up as well where both parties, the legislative branch and the executive branch come together to say we want to help our fellow citizens and of course, we want to help everybody, but in this instance, we know that we can certainly work to help others in the private sector and the public sector come together for a real solution that takes a little bit of the stress off what is a very, very difficult process for them. So while the government in Washington may not be open, the government in Connecticut is open and we are acting and we're acting in a responsible way to help our citizens and for that, Madam President, I urge my colleagues to vote yes. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further?
Senator Fasano?
SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I want to join in the chorus here of thank you's. Government Lamont, I want to thank him and his staff for the work that they did on this and not so much the leadership of all four caucuses as much as the staff of all four caucuses. Some of these folks worked, didn’t even have power in their house until recently. Others were fighting storms and had their families to deal with, but yet reiterations of this bill were going back and forth through the email until everybody was satisfied with the language and had an opportunity to remark. I haven’t seen that type of relationship since we did the bipartisan budget a couple of years back.

The Connecticut Bankers Association, by virtue of Government Lamont thinking outside of the box and contacting the private sector. This idea developed as a way of solving a problem, not leaving it to government to solve it, but saying how can we get the private sector involved to improve the quality of life and look, this is unique. These are folks who number one, can't collect unemployment because they're employed, they can't find another job or they’ve got to leave their job, all the safety nets that we have put out there from the beginning of time that the legislature put together, SNAP funding, we have the foreclosure program. All those things that we put out are not applicable to this group of folks given the unique circumstances and I'm proud that this legislature stood up and said we need to govern. Collectively, we need to govern where other people have stalled.
Government Lamont, now a week and a half ago, got on the phone, called the private sector and said I need help. Legislative leaders, we need help. Leaders bought into the idea, the bill was formed and here we are today. Look how fast government and private sector responded to a problem. Look how quickly we got together and something that was never done in this building and said let's do it and we did it. We can't solve all the problems this way, but this is a huge step in this building in the right direction. So I applaud the leadership. Madam President, thank you for your input on this bill. This is a terrific partnership. I hope this sets the tone for the rest of session in both Chambers. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further? Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, speaking in support of the Emergency Certified Bill, I am gratified that this bill did pass the House of Representatives by a substantial bipartisan margin, certainly hoping for the same result here in the Senate. Wanted to thank Government Lamont for his quick action on this and also yourself, Madam President, for your involvement as an advocate for this as well. I think it does show that state government can be quickly responsive when a needed emerges, that we're not always caught up in the ponderous process that leaves things hanging and people suffering, and it is possible for government to be decisive and it was necessary in this case.
And I certainly also want to thank the bipartisan leadership, Senator Fasano for his work in this, on this bill and working closely on the drafts so that as it went forward, our majority leader, Senator Duff, in advocating for action on this as well. Senator Witkos, want to thank him for his comments. I'd also like to offer a special thanks to Senator Osten who approached me early with an idea quite similar to this about trying to do something for these residents because there are so many in her district, primarily Coast Guard employees. And I wanted to thank her for her early interest and advocacy. And in the House, of course, Speaker Aresimowicz and Majority Leader Ritter and Minority Leader Klarides for their quick interest and involvement. And there is a need for action here, Madam President, because this is time sensitive. People in our state are suffering.

For example, a friend of mine who is deacon at our parish has a niece who is a TSA employee. She is working without being paid. Her husband is a member of the Coast Guard. He is also working without being paid so they were a two-income family living a modest, but relatively comfortable middle class life and with the loss of one income, they were reduced to somewhat difficult circumstances. With the loss of both incomes at the same time, the situation is rapidly becoming extreme and that is something that is just one example of something that's happening all over this state at this point. And it was said in the debate earlier that these are federal employees so therefore, it's not the responsibility of the State of Connecticut, but they are in fact Connecticut residents. They are people who are not able to pay their bills in Connecticut. They're
having trouble paying their mortgages to Connecticut banks, trouble paying their taxes to Connecticut municipalities, trouble paying their bills at grocery stores and department stores in Connecticut. So this is a Connecticut issue. It is not just a federal issue and it's one that really was our responsibility to try to find a way to take an action on and I believe we're leading the nation in that regard.

And perhaps these residents are not equally distributed throughout the state. Of course, we know, in Senator Osten's district, there are many members of the Coast Guard, Senator Kissel's district, many TSA employees, many federal prison employees in Senator Kushner's district, but there are also all of the federal court employees who work in the court houses in Hartford and New Haven and in Bridgeport. The prosecutors, the US attorneys, the federal public defenders, all of the other federal court employees who are working in those three federal court houses in the state, all showing up for their jobs every day and at the same time, doing so without being paid. So this is something that is important for us to do and to take action on at this time. And also, Madam President, in addition to the component that's been discussed about the bank loan guarantees, another significant issue and of course, this is something that Senator Osten and Senator Needleman will deal with in their other official capacity is the issue of trying to provide some assistance with people whose tax bills would otherwise be due, property tax bills otherwise due in January. And as we know, there is a statutory 18 percent interest on late payments of property taxes which is not waivable by the municipality because it is a statutory penalty unless we take action to
waive that and to give greater flexibility which we are doing with this bill today.

So, Madam President, this is a valuable bill today, something I think that is time sensitive, something in which we can all be proud, and I think, as Senator Fasano said, it's a good note for the beginning of the session on a consensus bipartisan basis. So Thank you, Madam President and I urge an overwhelming vote for this bill. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Acting in concurrence and approval of the bill, will you remark further? Will you remark further? If not, would the Clerk please announce a roll call and will the machine be opened please?

CLERK:

An immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. An immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Have all the members voted? If all the members have voted, the machine will be closed and would the Clerk announce the results of the vote.

CLERK:

House Bill No. 5765.
Total number voting 33
Necessary for adoption 17
Those voting Yea 32
Those voting Nay 1
Absent and not voting 0

THE CHAIR:

The Bill is passed and is adopted. [gavel] Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move for immediate transmittal to the Governor, please.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I believe that concludes our business for today and I will yield for any points of personal privilege or announcements.

THE CHAIR:

Any points of personal privilege? Seeing none, Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, that's great. We're getting out and the sun's still out so
with that, I move that we adjourn subject to call of the Chair.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, sir. Are there any other announcements? Seeing none, without objection, the Senate stands adjourned.

On motion of Senator Duff of the 25th, the Senate at 3:23 p.m. adjourned subject to the call of the chair.