



Major Issues 2017



Connecticut General Assembly

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

Methodology

This slideshow represents the professional, nonpartisan views of staff in the Office Legislative Research (OLR), the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), and the Legislative Commissioners' Office (LCO) on the issues legislators might see in 2017. It does not represent staff suggestions or recommendations.

We identified issues based on interim studies; research requests; non-confidential discussions with legislators, other legislative participants, and executive branch agencies; and our general subject knowledge.



State Budget

The FY 18 – FY 19 biennial budget will be one of the legislature's top priorities this session, with OFA projecting that the state will need to reduce non-fixed, discretionary costs by \$1.2 billion in FY 18 to balance General Fund expenditures with consensus revenue projections. Options include cutting education, municipal aid, state employee salaries and benefits, criminal justice, public safety, environmental protection, and economic development funding.



Incentivizing Regional Collaboration

Municipalities, both urban and suburban, are feeling the fiscal pressure of maintaining or expanding services without increasing taxes. Compounding the challenge are rising costs, decreasing state aid, and property tax bases that are not growing fast enough to relieve the fiscal strain. In 2017, the legislature may look for ways to relieve that strain by encouraging municipalities to collaborate on activities and deliver services regionally.



***CCJEF v. Rell* Court Decision**

Last September, the Superior Court ruled that the state did not meet its constitutional obligation to provide an adequate education to public school students. That decision, which was part of the ongoing *Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) v. Rell*, is under appeal. In the meantime, the legislature may consider enacting legislation to address the issues the decision raised or wait for the courts to identify those education policies requiring revision.



Transportation Lockbox

Legislators may again consider approving a constitutional amendment requiring that certain Special Transportation Fund revenues be secured in a figurative "lockbox" and prohibiting the legislature from using those funds for non-transportation purposes. If the legislature approves the amendment in 2017, it will be placed on the November 2018 ballot. If a majority of voters approve the amendment, it will become part of the state constitution.



Improving the State's Business Climate

This session, the legislature may consider tax proposals to improve the state's business climate by stimulating business investment and job creation that increases tax revenues without increasing tax rates. Possible proposals include (1) creating tax incentives for businesses making capital investments in the state, (2) providing administrative and regulatory relief to taxpayers, and (3) targeting the state's business tax incentives to specific high-growth industries.



Prescription Opioid Drug Abuse

Recent increases in the number of emergency room visits and drug overdose deaths involving prescription opioid painkillers prompted the legislature to authorize various policies to reduce and prevent opioid drug abuse, including increasing access to opioid antagonists and establishing a seven-day limit on certain prescriptions. This session, the legislature may consider additional proposals to address this problem, including modifying practitioners' prescribing practices and allowing pharmacies to sell non-prescription opioid antagonists.



Child Abuse and Neglect

In October, the Office of the Child Advocate released the findings of its investigation into the critical injuries a one-year-old child sustained while in DCF-approved relative foster care, raising “widespread systemic concerns” about the department’s relative foster care placement practices. In 2017, the legislature will likely review those practices and may consider related legislation.



Juvenile Justice Reform

In 2016, the legislature considered the Governor's Second Chance Society 2.0 initiative, which would have created a new category of individuals within the juvenile justice system, "young adults," and in doing so, gradually raise the maximum age of juvenile justice jurisdiction over a period of three years from age 17 to age 20. In 2017, the legislature may again consider this initiative and other related proposals.



Paid Family and Medical Leave

In recent years, the legislature considered expanding the state's family and medical leave act (FMLA) to cover more employers and create a program providing limited wage replacement benefits to employees out on FMLA leave. The legislature may again consider these and other related proposals in 2017.



Funding for State Parks and Forests

2017 state budget talks may include ways to sustain funding for Connecticut's parks and forests, which primarily depend on General Fund appropriations. Last summer, mandatory budget cuts triggered reductions to state park services, including decreasing lifeguard and maintenance staffing, closing certain campgrounds, and adjusting park operating days and hours.



Transportation Network Companies

Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft use smartphone apps to connect people seeking rides to drivers willing to provide them. Drivers listed on TNC apps use their personal vehicles to provide rides, and riders pay through the apps. But it is unclear if this new business model is subject to traditional taxi regulations. Consequently, the legislature may consider proposals to regulate these companies and establish minimum insurance requirements.



Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS)

LTSS comprise a large component of the state's Medicaid spending. Traditionally, Medicaid paid for these services and supports in institutional settings, like nursing homes. But in recent years, Connecticut has implemented various "aging in place" initiatives that allow people to receive LTSS in less costly home- and community-based settings. This session, the legislature may consider the recommendations of a Program Review and Investigations Committee report on home- and community-based LTSS as well as other proposals related to the state's long-term care system.

