



Major Issues 2018



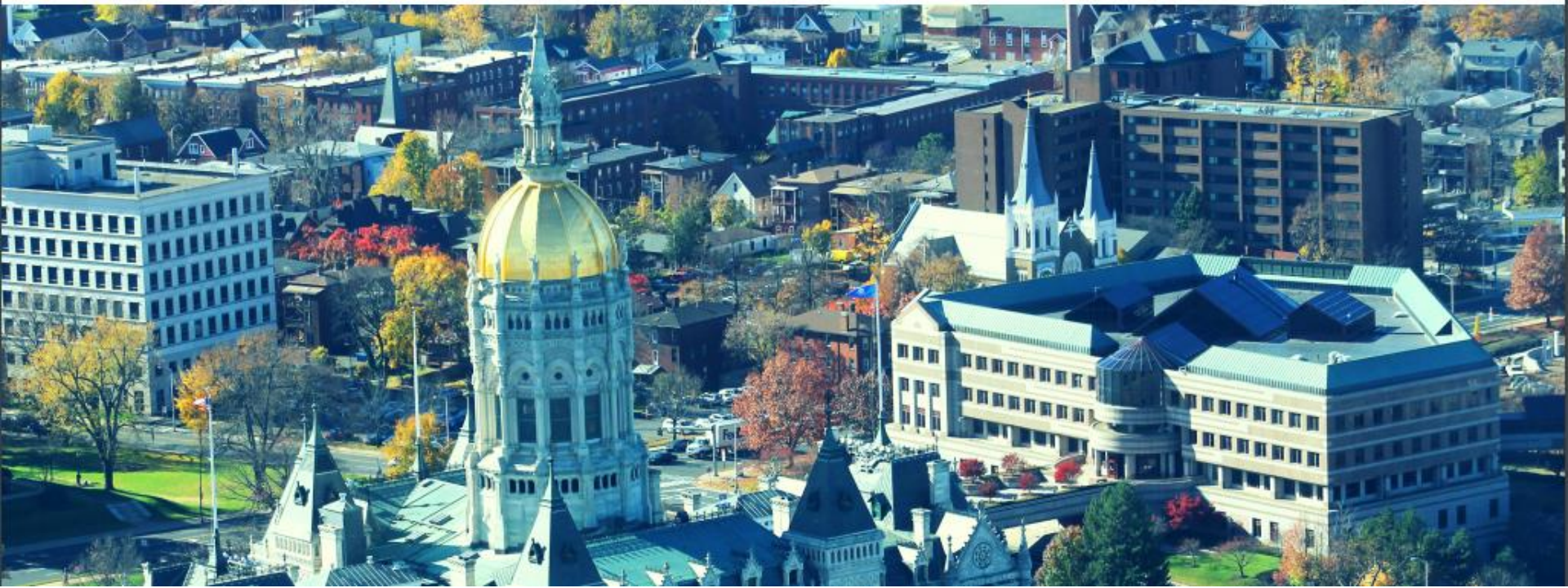
Connecticut General Assembly

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

Methodology

This slideshow describes issues that the Office Legislative Research (OLR), in consultation with the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) and the Legislative Commissioners' Office (LCO), believes legislators may face in 2018. It does not represent staff suggestions or recommendations for legislation.

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



Senior Centers

Legislation from 2016 (SA 16-7) created a task force to study the resources and training needs of senior center staff, municipal agents, and other municipal employees to facilitate delivery of health and human services and information. The task force, which began meeting in 2017, is exploring best practices for, and barriers to, delivering these services and information. In 2018, the legislature may consider recommendations from the task force's report as well as other related proposals.



Current Fiscal Year

The Governor signed the FY 18 – FY 19 biennial budget on October 31, 2017. The November 13, 2017 consensus revenue forecast, issued jointly by the Office of Fiscal Analysis and the Office of Policy and Management, indicates that FY 18 revenue was already tracking \$178.4 million below levels assumed in the budget. On December 13, 2017, the Governor issued deficit mitigation options to the General Assembly.



Financial Planner Disclosures

In 2017, PA 17-120 required certain financial planners to disclose to consumers whether they have a fiduciary duty (i.e. an obligation to act in the client's best interest) with regard to each financial recommendation they make. In 2018, the legislature may seek to expand these requirements.



Concussions

The state's concussion laws require school coaches to follow certain protocols when an athlete incurs a head injury, including removing the student from athletic activities until he or she receives medical clearance. Because of concerns over the long-term effects of concussions on young athletes, the Committee on Children may seek to expand these requirements beyond intramural and interscholastic sports.



Economic Development Marketing

In recent months, widespread media reports suggested that businesses may be overlooking the state's many advantages, such as an educated workforce, proximate location, and high quality of life. In 2017, the legislature established a working group to develop a marketing plan to attract businesses to the state, encourage entrepreneurship, and leverage private resources to bolster the state's marketing efforts (SA 17-18). The group's report is due to the legislature in January 2018. The legislature may consider proposals in the 2018 session based on the working group's recommendations as well as other proposals related to economic development and marketing the state.



Connecticut
still revolutionary

Supreme Court Education Ruling

The State Supreme Court is currently considering appeals from both sides of the *Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) v. Rell* case. The court must consider whether Connecticut is meeting its constitutional obligation to provide public school students with an adequate education. While the timing of the court's decision is not clear, if a ruling comes during the 2018 session the legislature may be prompted to address the issues it raises.



Utility Storm Response

At the end of October, a severe windstorm knocked out power for over 200,000 Connecticut residents. The Energy and Technology Committee has already held an informational forum on the electric companies' response to the outages and may consider legislation to improve the companies' response and bolster storm response legislation enacted in 2012 (PA 12-148).



Bottle Redemption

By law, a five-cent deposit is charged on a beverage container at the time of purchase, which is refunded to the consumer when the container is returned to a retailer or redemption center. The General Fund receives the unclaimed deposits. The legislature may consider proposals to change the law such as (1) replacing the deposit with a nonrefundable fee to fund recycling programs, (2) increasing the deposit value, (3) increasing the handling fee for processing containers, and (4) expanding the law's scope to include such things as nips, juices, teas, or sports drinks.



Impact of Federal Tax Reform

Connecticut, like most other states, links its tax code to the federal tax code by incorporating various federal provisions (e.g., personal and corporation income tax exclusions, deductions, and credits and gift and estate tax exclusions). Consequently, recently enacted federal tax changes could have far-reaching implications for Connecticut residents and businesses. The General Assembly will likely analyze their implications for Connecticut taxpayers and the state's revenue collections. The legislature may also consider conforming or compensating changes to the state's tax code in response to the federal changes.



Occupational Licensing

This session, the legislature may consider certain proposals dealing with occupational licensing to improve the state's business climate. These proposals could include (1) removing unnecessary barriers to labor markets by improving license portability across states, (2) eliminating unnecessary credentials, and (3) relaxing certain burdensome requirements.



Constitutional Restrictions on Voting

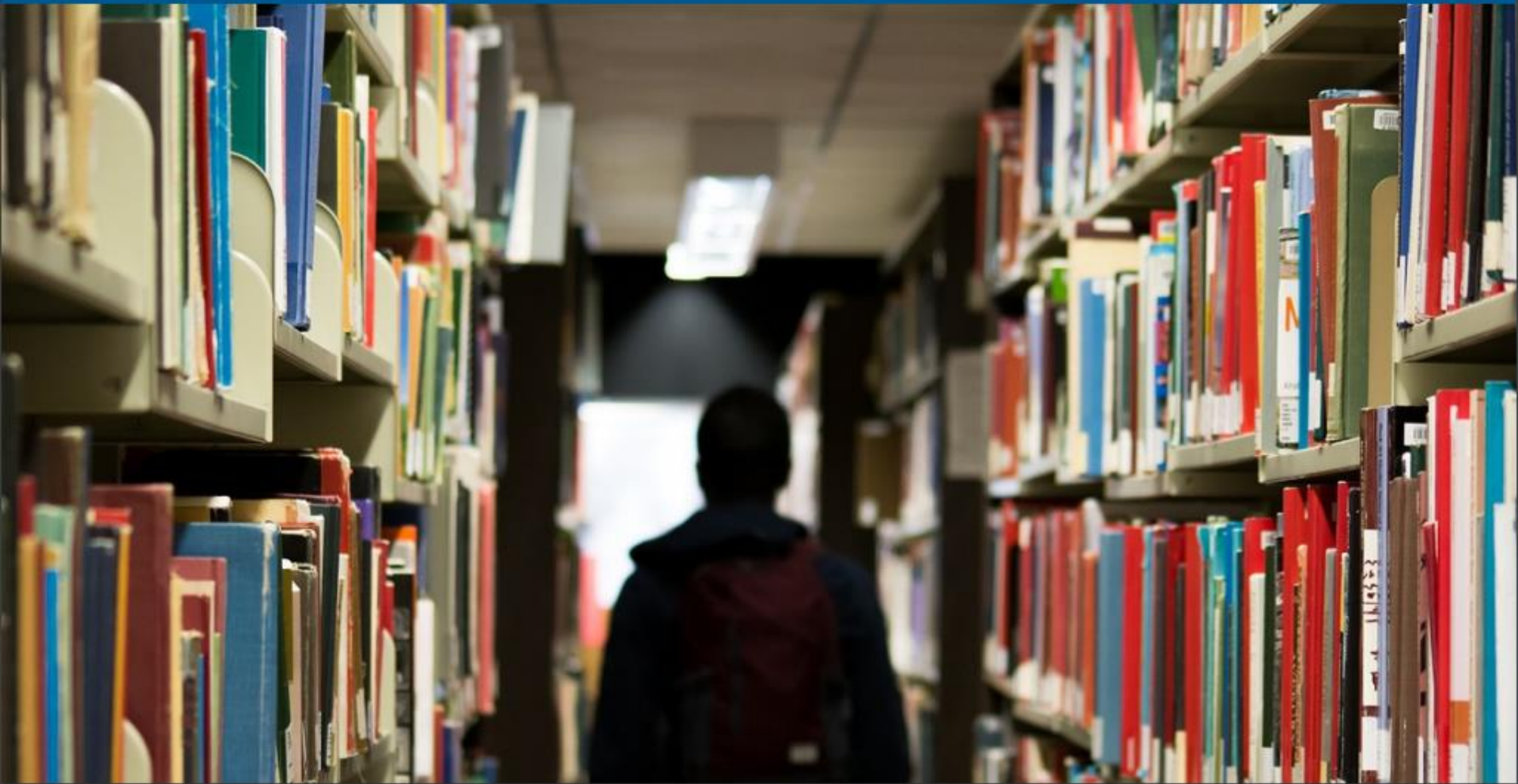
The state constitution contains provisions regarding the administration of elections in Connecticut, including requiring voters to cast their ballots at their polling place on Election Day, unless they qualify to vote by absentee ballot because, among other reasons, they will be out of town on Election Day or they are sick or have a physical disability. The legislature may reconsider a proposed constitutional amendment to ease these restrictions and grant the legislature increased authority to pass legislation relating to the time, place, and manner of voting. For example, in 2017 the House passed sHJ 95, which would have authorized the legislature to provide by law for an in-person early voting period.



VOTE

Community College Consolidation

The Board of Regents for Higher Education has approved a plan to consolidate the state's 12 regional community-technical colleges into a single entity by July 2019. The legislature may consider issues related to the consolidation plan in the upcoming session.



Increasing Housing Opportunities

In 2018, the legislature will likely continue to consider bills aimed at increasing fair and equal housing opportunities, including proposals to eliminate historic patterns of segregation by (1) incentivizing the creation and rehabilitation of affordable housing in a variety of locations and (2) addressing the impact of local zoning regulations.



Medical Assistance

Challenges at the state and federal level may prompt the legislature to debate proposals on the size and scope of the state's medical assistance programs, including Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, which together are known as HUSKY Health in Connecticut.



Prescription Drug Pricing, Transparency, & Formulary Changes

In 2017, the Insurance and Real Estate Committee introduced SB 925 and HB 7123, which sought to curb rising prescription drug costs and minimize the impact on consumers of changing prescription drug formularies, respectively. In 2018, the legislature may again consider bills regulating prescription drug pricing, transparency, and formulary changes.



Sex Offender Registration

The Connecticut Sentencing Commission's final report on the sex offender registration system, including legislative recommendations, was submitted to the legislature in mid-December. The legislature may act on those recommendations in the upcoming session.



Paid Family and Medical Leave

In 2017, the legislature considered bills (SB 1 and HB 6212) that would expand the state's family and medical leave act (FMLA) to cover more employers and create a program to provide limited wage replacement benefits to employees out on FMLA leave. The legislature may consider some form of this initiative in 2018.



Municipal Cost Efficiencies

In 2018, the legislature will likely continue its emphasis on promoting municipal cost efficiencies by (1) examining ways to provide mandate relief, (2) removing barriers to regionalizing municipal functions, (3) providing incentives for regional collaboration, and (4) implementing mechanisms to track and evaluate these initiatives.



Regulation of Whiting Forensic Division

The Whiting Forensic Division generally cares for patients with psychiatric issues under maximum security conditions. This fall, ten staff members were arrested following a state police investigation of ongoing patient abuse. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) is currently investigating the matter and to date, 37 employees have been placed on administrative leave (of these, five resigned and five were terminated). This session, the legislature may consider related legislation, such as transferring regulatory authority of state-funded psychiatric facilities from DMHAS to the Department of Public Health and staff training requirements.



Drone Use

With private, commercial, and governmental drone use expanding, the legislature may consider proposals limiting law enforcement use of drones without a warrant, prohibiting anyone from arming a drone with a weapon, and specifying how using a drone affects voyeurism crimes.



Transportation Funding

Due to declining fuel tax receipts and the demands of its aging infrastructure, the state has struggled to maintain and improve its transportation system within current dedicated transportation revenue. Given this, the legislature may again consider various measures to increase revenue and financing for transportation, such as implementing tolling, raising motor vehicle fees, or authorizing additional bonding for new transportation projects.



Veterans' Benefits

In 2018, the legislature may continue to explore proposals that increase aid and benefits to Connecticut veterans. These proposals may include (1) increasing property tax exemption amounts, (2) expanding those who qualify for veterans' benefits, and (3) exempting specific groups of veterans from certain fees.

