



## 2024 Acts Affecting Municipalities

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## Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts and special acts) significantly affecting municipalities enacted during the 2024 regular legislative session and June Special Session (JSS). OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Education, Acts Affecting Criminal Justice and Public Safety, and Acts Affecting Town Clerks and Elections, are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) or special act (SA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or [General Assembly's website](#).

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# Climate Resiliency

## *Loan Program for Climate Resiliency Projects*

New legislation requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to set up a low interest loan program for municipalities and private entities for climate resiliency projects funded through a new Climate Resiliency Revolving Loan Fund and authorizes up to \$10 million in state general obligation bonds to capitalize the fund. It also requires DEEP to report annually to the Environment Committee on the program ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 58 & 59, effective July 1, 2024).

## *Resilient Bridgeport Project*

The legislature authorized the DEEP commissioner to acquire (by purchase, gift, devise, exchange, or eminent domain) up to 25.7 acres in Bridgeport for flood control and protection and related public purposes. The acquisition must be needed to build a disaster relief, long-term recovery, or infrastructure restoration project (i.e., the Resilient Bridgeport Project). The act also prescribes the process for DEEP, if necessary, to require the relocation or removal of public service facilities for the property ([PA 24-69](#), § 14, effective July 1, 2024).

# Code Enforcement

## *Blight Penalties*

This session, the legislature changed the maximum daily penalties that municipalities may set for blight ordinance violations. Prior law's maximum daily penalty was the same for violations at all residential and commercial properties but varied based on whether the property was occupied or vacant and on the number of prior violations. As Table 1 shows, under the new law, the maximum daily penalties for violations at commercial and residential properties with six or more units are based on the square footage of buildings on the properties, regardless of occupancy or prior violations ([PA 24-143](#), § 5, effective October 1, 2024).

**Table 1: Maximum Daily Blight Penalty**

<i>Property Type</i>	<i>Prior Law</i>	<i>New Act</i>
<b>Residential (six or fewer units)</b>		
<i>Occupied</i>	\$150	\$150
<i>Vacant</i>	250	250
<i>Third or subsequent violation in a year</i>	1,000	1,000
<b>Residential (7 to 39 units)</b>	Same as above	10 cents per sq. ft.

Table 1 (continued)

<i>Property Type</i>	<i>Prior Law</i>	<i>New Act</i>
<b>Residential (40+ units)</b>	Same as above	12 cents per sq. ft.
<b>Commercial</b>	Same as above	10 cents per sq. ft.

### ***Liens for Unpaid Zoning Violation Fines***

Under a new law, unpaid fines imposed under municipal ordinances establishing penalties for violating local zoning regulations are liens on the affected real estate, just as existing law provides for unpaid blight fines ([PA 24-143](#), § 8, effective October 1, 2024).

## **Economic Development**

### ***Community Economic Development Fund (CEDF)***

This session, the legislature passed a law allowing CEDF to conduct business with fewer jurisdictional restrictions. As part of these changes, the new law allows CEDF to meet a requirement to spend 70% of assistance in specified communities by providing the assistance to public investment communities or qualified census tracts (i.e., a tract federally certified as having at least 50% of households with income below 60% of the area median gross income or a poverty rate of at least 25%), as well as targeted investment communities which prior law allowed. Additionally, the new law restructures the membership of CEDF’s board of directors to, among other things, generally include a higher ratio of members representing the communities in which CEDF invests ([PA 24-36](#), effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Concentrated Poverty Pilot Program***

The legislature created a pilot program this session aimed at reducing concentrated poverty in the state. A new office within the state’s Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) must develop a 10-year plan for a participating “concentrated poverty census tract” (i.e., a tract in which at least 30% of households have incomes below the federal poverty level) together with specified state agencies and local officials and a community development corporation established by community members to help implement it.

This new law also creates a working group to develop a guidance document that sets a framework that must be incorporated into the plan. Among other things, the plan must include a list of possible projects determined to be the most appropriate and effective to eliminate concentrated poverty in the tract. The new law gives these projects priority for specified state grants and adds incentives to the JobsCT tax rebate program for hiring people living in concentrated poverty census tracts ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 118-123, effective upon passage).

## ***Distressed Municipality Designation***

A new law extends, from five years to 10, the period of time that a municipality with a population of more than 100,000 is deemed to be a “distressed municipality” after being removed from the annual list published by DECD. It keeps the five-year grace period for other municipalities. By law, distressed municipalities are those that DECD determines have the highest levels of fiscal and economic distress ([PA 24-81](#), § 56, effective October 1, 2024).

## ***Economic Development and Tourism in the Greater Mystic Area***

This session, the legislature established a working group to develop an economic development and tourism plan for the greater Mystic area (i.e., Groton, New London, and Stonington). Among other things, the group is tasked with developing initiatives to promote tourism, examining options to ease traffic, and proposing ways to develop the workforce. It must consider the potential impact of future flooding events on tourism areas and identify state and federal funding opportunities for tourism, transportation, and climate resilience infrastructure ([SA 24-2](#), effective upon passage).

## ***Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridors***

This session, the legislature increased, from three to seven, the number of Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridors the banking commissioner must designate. By law, the designation’s purpose is to promote secured and unsecured lending in the state. In practice, the designation has been used to help facilitate area-specific economic development planning initiatives in the corridors ([PA 24-23](#), effective October 1, 2024).

## **Elections**

### ***Absentee Ballot Drop Box Recordings***

In a new law, the legislature requires municipalities to make video recordings of absentee ballot drop boxes and release them to the public. Specifically, beginning July 1, 2025, they must record drop boxes beginning the first day absentee ballots are issued for an election or primary and continue recording until the town clerk’s last ballot retrieval. These recordings must (1) include evidence of the date and time and (2) be made publicly available within five days after the last retrieval and kept for at least a year ([PA 24-148](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

This report highlights election-related legislation impacting municipalities. For more information on other election laws passed in 2024, please see [Acts Affecting Town Clerks and Elections](#).



## ***Nondisclosure of Election-Related Worker Addresses***

A new act generally prohibits municipal public agencies from disclosing under the Freedom of Information Act the residential address of certain election-related workers if the worker requests it. Specifically, the worker must give the municipality a written request and a substitute business or municipal office address that may be disclosed. The disclosure prohibition generally applies 90 days before and after the election ([PA 24-148](#), § 31, effective July 1, 2024).

## **Employees and Employee Benefits**

### ***Municipal Employee Retirement Changes***

A new law creates the Municipal Employees Retirement Commission and, starting January 1, 2025, transfers responsibility for the municipal employees retirement system (MERS) and the Policemen and Firemen Survivors' Benefit Fund ("benefit fund") from the State Employees Retirement Commission (SERC) to the new commission. Broadly, it gives the new commission powers and responsibilities over MERS and the benefit fund and imposes related requirements similar to those that apply to SERC. The new law also (1) allows a MERS retiree who returns to work for a municipality that does not participate in MERS to participate in and receive credit in that municipality's retirement system and (2) requires the comptroller to create and administer a municipal defined contribution retirement plan (e.g., 401(k)), which any municipality may join ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 82-90, most provisions effective January 1, 2025).

### ***Municipalities Under the Family and Medical Leave Laws***

By law, municipalities are not considered employers covered by the state's Family and Medical Leave Act, and they are only employers under the state's paid family and medical leave law if their employees join the program through collective bargaining. This year, the legislature specified that a "municipality" under these laws is any metropolitan district, town, consolidated town and city, consolidated town and borough, city, borough, village, fire and sewer district, sewer district, and municipal organization authorized to levy and collect taxes ([PA 24-5](#), §§ 1 & 7, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Service Animal Training Leave***

This year, the legislature passed a law requiring municipalities to grant certain municipal employees leave to attend service animal training. Under the new law, full-time permanent employees may use up to 20 days of accumulated paid sick leave to take service animal training from a qualified organization. To qualify, the employee must have been employed for at least 12 consecutive months and have a disability, as defined in state law ([PA 24-18](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2024).

## **Grants, Aid, and Municipal Finance**

### ***Animal Population Control Program***

A new law allows a municipal pound to use a voucher from the Animal Population Control Program to get any dog or cat, rather than only ones with pyometra, sterilized and vaccinated before it is purchased or adopted from the pound ([PA 24-69](#), § 3, effective upon passage).

### ***Community Investment Fund (CIF) 2030***

A new law eliminates CIF funding for certain grants that are proposed by municipalities, community development corporations, or nonprofit corporations. Under prior law, these entities could use the grants to give certain loans to small businesses ([PA 24-149](#), § 2, effective upon passage).

### ***Discretionary State Funding Applications***

Existing law disqualifies any municipality that fails to update its plan of conservation and development every 10 years or submit a letter to specified state officials explaining why it did not do so from receiving discretionary state funds unless the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary waives this provision. A new law limits the discretionary funding applications to which municipalities must attach this letter to those exceeding \$25,000 ([PA 24-132](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Drone Grant Program***

New legislation requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), within available resources, to administer a municipal grant program for municipalities to purchase drones, accessories, or both, and authorizes up to \$3 million in state general obligation bonds for the program. DESPP must also report to the Public Safety and Security Committee on the program, including grant applications received and grants awarded for each year in which grants are issued ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 60 & 61, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Municipal Accountability Review Board Law***

A new law makes various changes to the Municipal Accountability Review Board (MARB) law, including (1) changing the procedure for designating municipalities referred by OPM to the Municipal Finance Advisory Commission as tier I municipalities; (2) modifying the criteria and procedure used to determine whether a municipality keeps its tier designation; (3) authorizing Municipal Restructuring Fund distributions to be used to pay an arbitrator selected under MARB's existing binding arbitration requirements; and (4) expanding the criteria MARB must use to

determine whether to designate a tier III municipality as a tier IV municipality ([PA 24-132](#), §§ 13-16, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Municipal Audit Act Requirements***

By law, municipalities, regional school districts, and other local and regional entities must have their financial statements and accounts audited by an independent auditor at least annually and submit the audit reports to various local officials and OPM. This session, the legislature amended this law to, among other things, (1) increase, from \$10,000 to \$50,000, the maximum civil penalty OPM can assess an entity or auditor that misses the audit filing deadline and (2) allow OPM to assess the penalty by reducing one or more grants it awards to the entity, including a payment in lieu of taxes grant ([PA 24-132](#), § 17, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Open Space Land***

The state's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program generally gives state grants to municipalities, land trusts, and water companies to buy land for its preservation as open space. A new law makes the following three changes related to the program:

1. allows up to 5% of grants to reimburse for in-kind services or incidental expenses under certain circumstances;
2. expands the circumstances under which these grant funds can be used to restore or protect open space an applicant already owns, such as when the land is in an environmental justice community; and
3. increases the Natural Heritage, Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Review Board's membership to include two DEEP-appointed members who represent or are from certain communities, such as environmental justice areas ([PA 24-69](#), §§ 9-13, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Population Data for Municipal Grants***

For FY 25, a new law requires OPM to use the Department of Public Health's (DPH) 2021 population estimates when calculating municipal grants that are based, at least in part, on a municipality's current population ([PA 24-81](#), § 109, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP)***

RPIP is a competitive grant program for regional councils of governments and regional educational service centers designed to encourage municipalities to participate in regional shared services projects. This year, the legislature expanded the eligible purposes for which OPM may award RPIP grants to include services that two or more participating municipalities or boards of education can

provide on a regional and ongoing basis, rather than services that one or more of these entities currently provide but not regionally. It also modified the information applicants must provide about their proposals as part of their RPIP applications and the selection criteria OPM must use to award the grants ([PA 24-132](#), § 7, July 1, 2024).

### ***School Construction Requirements***

Beginning with school construction grant applications submitted on and after July 1, 2026, new legislation requires that an applicant's local share authorization include an additional 10% contingency in accordance with Department of Administrative Services (DAS) guidance. It also allows the DAS commissioner to disapprove an application if it does not include an attestation from the local fire marshal or district or municipal health department, as applicable, that the project plans comply with the state fire marshal's or DPH's requirements ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 152 & 154, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP)***

This session the legislature increased, from \$500,000 to \$1 million, the maximum total STEAP grant amount a municipality may receive in a fiscal year. By law, STEAP grants provide funding to municipalities that are ineligible for Urban Action grants and must be used for economic development, community conservation, and quality-of-life capital projects ([PA 24-81](#), § 77, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***State Single Audit Act Requirements***

By law, municipalities (and other nonstate entities) that spend substantial amounts of state funding during a fiscal year must undergo a single audit (i.e., an audit that generally covers the entity's financial statements and state assistance) or a program-specific audit (i.e., an audit of a single state program). A new law increases, from \$300,000 to \$500,000, the amount of state financial assistance a municipality (or other nonstate entity) can spend in its fiscal year before it is subject to this audit requirement and related laws. The new law also limits the maximum extension state agencies can give municipalities (and other nonstate entities) to file copies of their audits under certain conditions. Specifically, it limits the extension to 12 months after the end of the fiscal year to which the audit applies ([PA 24-132](#), §§ 11 & 12, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Supportive Housing Assistance Program***

This session, the legislature revised a recently enacted grant program for providers of supportive housing for people with an intellectual disability or other developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder. Among other things, the new law expands the types of entities eligible

for program grants to include not just nonprofits but other eligible developers, such as housing construction businesses meeting certain requirements, municipal developers, or housing authorities ([PA 24-122](#), § 3, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Youth Sports Grant Program***

A new law creates a youth sports grant program to give grants to distressed municipalities for nonprofit youth sports organizations providing sports programs and activities primarily for local children. It funds the program with 2% of the state’s monthly revenue from sports wagering. Beginning with FY 27, distressed municipalities may apply to OPM for the grants. Those awarded grants must disburse them to eligible organizations and prioritize sports programs and activities that (1) provide adaptive sports for children and young adults with disabilities or (2) seek to improve outcomes in mental health, educational achievement, or community cohesion ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 110 & 111, most provisions effective July 1, 2025).

This report highlights education funding-related legislation impacting municipalities. For more information on education laws passed in 2024, please see [Acts Affecting Education](#).

## **Housing Affordability and Planning**

### ***Connecticut Municipal Redevelopment Authority***

This year, the legislature passed a law requiring the Connecticut Municipal Redevelopment Authority (MRDA) to provide member municipalities, upon their request, with technical support to develop project criteria and local regulations to increase housing production. (By law, municipalities opting to collaborate with MRDA must establish an area (a “housing growth zone”) in which zoning regulations facilitate substantial new housing development.) It also authorizes MRDA to set criteria to evaluate the potential impact of its projects, including on the tax base.

The new law also eliminates the following two requirements for member municipalities: (1) appointing a local development board to be a liaison to the authority and (2) developing an economic development master plan before entering a memorandum of agreement with the authority to establish a development district ([PA 24-81](#), §§ 82-85 & 243, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Conversion of Vacant Nursing Homes to Multifamily Housing***

Under a new law, municipalities must allow for converting eligible vacant nursing homes to multifamily housing, subject only to a “summary review” (a determination made without requiring a public hearing or discretionary zoning action (e.g., a variance) that the conversion to housing

conforms with applicable zoning regulations and will not impact public health or safety). To be eligible, (1) a nursing home must be a freestanding structure, (2) its owner must declare in writing that it has been vacant for at least 90 days, and (3) it must not be a nonconforming use. Additionally, the conversion must not involve demolishing the existing structure or substantially altering its footprint ([PA 24-143](#), § 3, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Design Review Process Study***

A new law requires the majority leaders' roundtable group on affordable housing to study municipal design review processes required for residential developments and, by January 1, 2025, report its findings and recommendations to the Planning and Development and Housing committees. Among other things, the study must examine how (1) these processes impact the development and cost of affordable housing and (2) other jurisdictions have streamlined or eliminated them for affordable housing ([PA 24-143](#), § 2, effective upon passage).

### ***Middle Housing Developments***

Under new legislation, (1) municipal zoning regulations may allow middle housing developments (e.g., duplexes and triplexes) "as of right" on lots zoned for residential use, commercial use, or mixed-use development and (2) any municipality adopting this type of zoning regulation receives points towards a moratorium under the 8-30g affordable housing land use appeals procedure for each built middle housing dwelling unit. Specifically, a municipality receives 0.25 housing unit equivalent (HUE) points for each middle housing unit for which the municipality issues a certificate of occupancy ([PA 24-143](#), §§ 10-12, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Moratoria From the 8-30g Appeals Procedure***

A new law specifies that eligible dwelling units completed before a municipality's 8-30g moratorium begins, but not counted toward establishing the moratorium eligibility, may be counted toward qualifying for a subsequent moratorium. Under existing law, eligible units completed after a municipality's moratorium begins may already be counted toward qualifying for a subsequent moratorium ([PA 24-143](#), § 22, effective upon passage).

### ***Renters' Rebate Program***

Under a new law, renters applying for the state's renters' rebate program have until September 30, rather than October 1, to submit their applications and may no longer apply to OPM for an extension. It also (1) pushes up the deadline for towns to forward applications to OPM from November 30 to October 31 and (2) pushes back the date by which OPM must make a list of

approved applications and forward them to the comptroller for payment from October 15 to November 15 ([PA 24-132](#), §§ 8 & 9, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Reports on Residential Building Permit Applications***

By law, municipalities must annually report by March 31 to DECD on how many dwelling units were permitted or demolished in the prior year. A new law requires DECD to annually send each municipality a supplemental questionnaire asking about the number of approved or denied residential permit applications (e.g., subdivision, zoning permit, or site plan applications), including the number of proposed units that were involved ([PA 24-143](#), § 1, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Short-Term Rental Properties***

This session, the legislature explicitly authorized municipalities, by vote of their legislative bodies, to adopt an ordinance regulating the operation and use of short-term rental properties and requiring their licensure. It also allowed municipalities to hire consultants to help them develop these ordinances ([PA 24-143](#), § 7, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Tax Increment District Funding for Affordable Housing Renovation***

This session, the General Assembly enacted legislation allowing municipalities with a tax increment district to use their district master plan fund for additional improvement costs outside the district for renovating or rehabilitating certain 8-30g “set-aside developments” (i.e., deed-restricted affordable housing). A municipality may do so if the (1) development’s affordability deed restrictions will expire in three years or less and (2) costs are paid based on an agreement between the municipality and the development’s owner that the owner will renew the deed restrictions for at least 40 years ([PA 24-143](#), § 14, effective October 1, 2024).

This report highlights housing-related legislation impacting municipalities. For more information on housing-related laws passed in 2024, please see [Acts Affecting Housing and Real Estate](#).

## **Land Use**

### ***Battery-charged Security Fences***

This session, the legislature prohibited municipalities from adopting or enforcing ordinances, orders, or regulations that generally:

1. require a permit or fee to install or use a battery-charged security fence (i.e., type of electric fence), other than an alarm system permit;



2. impose installation or operational requirements for these fences that are inconsistent with those the act prescribes; or
3. prohibit installing or using these fences ([PA 24-71](#), § 2, effective upon passage).

### ***Solar Facilities***

This year, the legislature passed a law to expand and study solar facility deployment in the state. Among other things, it authorizes municipalities to amend their zoning regulations to establish a simplified approval process for solar canopy applications. A solar canopy is an outdoor, shade-providing structure that hosts solar panels located above a parking or driving area, pedestrian walkway, or other used surfaces (e.g., a carport).

The new law also requires the DEEP commissioner to study the feasibility and potential cost-related impacts of establishing a uniform capacity tax for solar facilities in the state. Among other things, the study must examine the current statutory framework for personal and real property taxes on solar facilities and analyze what tax amount per megawatt of capacity would fairly compensate municipalities without making projects unviable ([PA 24-31](#), various effective dates, as amended by [PA 24-151](#), § 113, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***The Siting Council***

A new law makes changes to the Public Utility Environmental Standards Act (PUESA), which governs the Connecticut Siting Council's authority and procedures and gives it jurisdiction over siting various energy facilities (e.g., generation and transmission projects). Among other things, the act (1) requires applicants to consult with state legislators and the municipality's legislative body for certain applications, (2) increases municipal participation account payments, and (3) requires the council to consider additional factors before approving an application for a transmission line or a solar facility. It also establishes new procedures for (1) violations, penalties, and enforcement of PUESA's provisions and certificate requirements and (2) property acquisitions through eminent domain ([PA 24-144](#), most provisions effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Vacant Lots***

A new law exempts certain vacant lots in subdivisions and resubdivisions from changes to municipal zoning regulations and maps. Specifically, it exempts vacant lots shown on a subdivision or resubdivision plan from changes adopted after the plan was approved or recorded if the (1) plan was recorded on or before October 1, 2024, and (2) lot's recorded chain of title references the plan. For vacant lots shown on a subdivision or resubdivision plan recorded on or before October 1, 2024, and before the respective municipality adopted zoning regulations, it exempts these lots from changes adopted after the plan was approved or recorded if the lot conformed at any time



with any applicable zoning regulations that were later adopted ([PA 24-143](#), § 21, effective October 1, 2024).

## **Property Taxes**

### ***Annual Mill Rate and Tax Levy Reports by Special Services Districts***

Under a new law, special services districts must provide annual statements to OPM on their mill rate and tax levy, just as municipalities and special taxing districts must already provide. The new law subjects them to the same \$100 fine for failing to file a true and correct statement ([PA 24-132](#), § 4, effective upon passage).

### ***Assessment of Certain Affordable Housing***

A new law requires municipalities to assess certain properties used for housing only for low- and moderate-income households based on the capitalized value of net rental income, rather than fair market value. Prior law explicitly required them to do so only if they had an ordinance classifying property as this housing type. “Net rental income” is the gross income of these properties as limited by rents and carrying charges, minus operating expenses and property taxes ([PA 24-143](#), § 9, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Exemption Deadline Waivers***

Under a new law, taxpayers in seven municipalities (Litchfield, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, Thomaston, Waterbury, and West Haven) may now claim a property tax exemption for specified property and grand lists even though they missed the filing deadline ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 72-79, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Exemption for Veterans With a P&T Disability Rating***

The legislature passed a new law this year that fully exempts from property tax a primary dwelling or motor vehicle for each former servicemember (i.e., veteran) who has a permanent and total (P&T) disability rating. The exemption may also be transferred to a veteran’s spouse or minor children in certain circumstances.

The eligibility criteria and application requirements for this new exemption are generally the same as those for the existing disability rating-based exemption for veterans. To qualify, a veteran must have served in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, or Space Force; reside in this state; and file for the exemption with the town assessor. Unlike this other exemption, though, the new law does not require the state to reimburse municipalities for any part of the exemption ([PA](#)

[24-46](#), effective October 1, 2024, and applicable to assessment years starting on or after that date).

### ***Fixed Property Tax Assessments***

An existing property tax incentive (under CGS § 12-65b) allows municipalities to freeze a property's assessed (i.e., taxable) value if it is being developed for certain specified purposes (e.g., office, retail, manufacturing, or certain multifamily residential purposes). This incentive allows the property's owner to develop the property without paying taxes on the improvements during the freeze. This year, the legislature changed the law to allow municipalities to provide a freeze for up to 30 years and for personal property as well as real property. Under prior law, the freeze could last for up to 10 years and applied only to real property ([PA 24-143](#), § 6, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Local Option Exemptions for Farm Machinery and Buildings***

A new law increases the cap on the local option property tax exemption for (1) farm machinery, from \$100,000 to \$250,000 in assessed value, and (2) buildings actually and exclusively used in farming or used as housing for the farmer's seasonal employees, from \$100,000 to \$500,000. By law, a municipality may adopt these exemptions, by vote of its legislative body, in any amount up to the cap ([PA 24-151](#), § 70, effective upon passage).

### ***Local Option Homestead Exemption***

Under a new law, municipalities may, by vote of their legislative bodies (or board of selectmen if the legislative body is a town meeting), provide a partial property tax exemption for certain owner-occupied primary residences. Specifically, it allows them to exempt between 5% and 35% of the assessed value of owner-occupied single-family homes and duplexes (including condominiums and common interest community units) ([PA 24-151](#), § 71, effective upon passage).

### ***Motor Vehicle Mill Rate***

Existing law allows municipalities and districts to tax motor vehicles at a different rate than other taxable property and caps the motor vehicle mill rate at 32.46 mills. A new law (1) requires those that set different mill rates for motor vehicles and other taxable property to impose the lower rate on motor vehicles and (2) explicitly authorizes them to set the motor vehicle mill rate as low as zero mills. It also requires OPM to notify municipalities (1) annually that they have these options, and the parameters around them, and (2) before implementing a revaluation, that they may consider reducing their motor vehicle mill rate ([SB 501, June Special Session \(JSS\)](#), § 13, effective July 1, 2025).

## ***Motor Vehicle Property Tax Assessments***

Beginning October 1, 2024, existing law (1) requires assessors to value motor vehicles using their MSRPs, subject to depreciation (rather than using a guide OPM annually selects); (2) requires the motor vehicle department to give municipalities a supplemental list of vehicles it registered on a monthly, rather than annual, basis; and (3) modifies the timeline for supplemental bills. This year, the legislature (1) adjusted the depreciation schedule assessors must use to value motor vehicles; (2) eliminated a requirement that OPM define a class of motor vehicles to be treated as personal property for taxing purposes; (3) specified how assessors must value commercial vehicle modifications and attachments; and (4) eliminated certain statutory deadlines for supplemental bills ([SB 501, JSS](#), §§ 1-12, most provisions effective July 1, 2024, and applicable to assessment years beginning October 1, 2024).

## ***PA 490 Program***

A new law makes the following prima facie evidence of land being classified as “farm land” or “open space land” for the state’s PA 490 program and qualifying for the program’s reduced property tax rate:

1. an advisory opinion from the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) commissioner stating that land is “farm land” or “open space land” or
2. inspection and approval by the DoAg commissioner or his designee of an agricultural or farming operation, place, establishment, or facility ([PA 24-70](#), §§ 2 & 3, effective July 1, 2024).

## ***Property Tax-Related Reporting Requirements***

A new law makes minor changes to municipal property tax reporting requirements, aligning with OPM practice. Specifically, the new law (1) shifts, from municipal tax collectors to assessors, the requirement to certify to OPM the revenue loss from the property tax exemption for totally disabled homeowners and (2) requires the annual statements municipal and special taxing district tax collectors provide to OPM on their mill rate and tax levy to be based on data for the ensuing, rather than preceding, fiscal year, beginning with the FY 25 statements ([PA 24-132](#), §§ 1-3, effective upon passage).

## ***Property Tax Revaluation Phase-Ins***

By law, municipalities may phase-in post-revaluation assessment increases in property values over a period of up to five years to give taxpayers time to adjust to the increases. This session, the legislature reduced, from 25% to 20%, the minimum revaluation phase-in factor, which in turn allows municipalities to phase-in up to 80%, rather than 75%, of the assessment increases over a

maximum of five assessment years ([PA 24-132](#), § 5, effective July 1, 2024, and applicable to assessment years beginning on or after October 1, 2024).

### ***Revaluation Delay for Stratford and Derby***

New legislation allows Stratford and Derby, with approval from their legislative bodies, to delay a revaluation scheduled for 2024 until the 2025 assessment year. If the town opts to do so, it must implement its next revaluation according to the schedule it was following before the delay. It may also prepare new tax bills based on the delayed revaluation ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 80 & 81, effective upon passage).

### ***Revaluation Notice Requirement for Certain Property Owners***

Under a new law, assessors must give residential property owners whose assessments were adjusted due to a foundation made from defective concrete at least 90 days' written notice before the next revaluation starts. By law, these properties' assessments must be updated with each revaluation to reflect their current value ([PA 24-55](#), effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Waiving Interest on Delinquent Property Taxes***

A new law requires, rather than allows, municipal tax collectors to waive interest on delinquent property taxes when the collector and assessor jointly find that the delinquency was due to a mistake by one of them, not the taxpayer's action or failure. It also requires the municipality's legislative body to approve these waivers ([PA 24-90](#), effective October 1, 2024, and applicable to assessment years starting on or after that date).

### ***Working Group on Tax Expenditures***

A new law creates a nine-member working group to examine the state's statutory tax expenditures to simplify the state tax code and identify those that are redundant, obsolete, duplicative, or inconsistent in language or policy. By law, "tax expenditures" are tax exemptions, exclusions, deductions, or credits that result in less revenue to the state or municipalities than they would otherwise receive. The working group must report its findings and recommendations for simplifying the state tax code to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee by January 1, 2025 ([PA 24-151](#), § 126, effective upon passage).

## **Public Health and Safety**

### ***Applicability of Fire Service Laws***

A new law repeals a law that says that (1) the state statutes concerning the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the Office of State Fire Administration do not apply to any (a) municipality that employs fewer than six paid firefighters or (b) volunteer fire department or its employees or members and (2) these municipalities and departments may elect to cooperate with the commission regarding the statutes. In doing so, it subjects these municipalities and departments to these laws.

The new law also (1) eliminates the Office of State Fire Administration and creates a Division of Fire Services Administration within DESPP and (2) creates a working group to make recommendations on the structure and operations of DAS's Office of the State Fire Marshal and Office of Education and Data Management ([PA 24-136](#), most provisions effective July 1, 2025).

### ***Automated Enforcement of Noise Violations***

A new law allows municipalities to use noise cameras (called “photo noise violation monitoring devices”) to enforce vehicle noise violations. To do so, a municipality must adopt an ordinance that (1) establishes a municipal violation for causing a vehicle to make a sound of 80 decibels or louder, except for sounds made by a vehicle's horn; (2) authorizes using cameras to enforce the ordinance; and (3) meets other specified requirements. It must also apply the law's provisions on camera operation, image review and citation issuance, hearings and available defenses, privacy, and data retention ([PA 24-151](#), §§ 132-136, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Automated Traffic Enforcement Devices***

This session, the legislature restarted and made permanent the Department of Transportation's (DOT) work zone speed camera program (the pilot program expired on December 31, 2023). The new law also makes several changes to the program, such as (1) expanding the permissible locations for work zone speed cameras; (2) lowering, from 15 mph to at least 10 mph, the minimum amount by which a vehicle must exceed the posted speed limit to be issued a warning or ticket; (3) modifying the fine structure and requiring a fine for a first violation if the vehicle's detected speed is 85 mph or more; and (4) requiring notice to a municipality's chief elected official before operating speed cameras in the municipality.

The new law also modifies the penalty and data retention provisions applicable to municipal speed and red light camera programs enacted in 2023. Generally, it specifies when a violation is considered a second or subsequent violation, which may be subject to higher penalties, and allows

municipalities or their vendors to keep data necessary to impose the penalties ([PA 24-40](#), §§ 15-17 & 42-50, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Cannabis and Medical Marijuana Businesses***

A new law, among other things, allows municipalities to prohibit any business from operating within the municipality if it (1) is illegally selling, offering, or delivering cannabis or (2) poses an immediate threat to public health and safety (i.e., has any (a) cannabis or cannabis product in connection with a violation or (b) cigarette or tobacco product next to cannabis or cannabis product) ([PA 24-76](#), § 8, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Cigarette Dealer Licenses and Renewals***

A new law requires cigarette dealer license applicants to post certain notices at their businesses and prescribes a remonstrance process for town residents to object to a proposed or renewed license. It also allows municipalities to adopt ordinances to require these dealers to notify the chief law enforcement official of license renewals and allows the official to comment. The Department of Revenue Services must consider these comments and report certain statistics on these notices to the legislature ([PA 24-81](#), §§ 57-59, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***DOT Road Safety Audits***

A new law requires DOT, by October 1, 2024, to develop a process allowing a municipality's chief executive officer, local traffic authority, or regional council of governments (COG) to request the department to do a road safety audit (RSA) of a specific state highway. If DOT will do one, it must coordinate with the applicable traffic authority to schedule the audit date; if not, the notice DOT sends must explain why. Additionally, the process must require DOT to submit RSA results to (1) the requesting entity and (2) state legislators representing the municipality or municipalities where the audited state highway is located ([PA 24-40](#), § 51, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Enforcing Boating Laws***

The legislature passed a new law that grants people with authority to enforce boating laws (e.g., environmental conservation officers and patrolmen) the power to make arrests on any part of waters lying between Connecticut and a neighboring state for violations and bring the violator to trial in the state where the violation happened. However, they may only exercise this cross-border authority if Massachusetts, New York, or Rhode Island enacts a similar law ([PA 24-123](#), effective upon passage).

## ***Illegally Passing a School Bus***

New legislation makes several changes to Connecticut’s motor vehicle law that generally prohibits drivers from passing a school bus with its red signal lights flashing (a.k.a. the “stop arm law”). Principally, it sunsets the current statutory authorization for municipalities and boards of education to use a live digital video school bus violation detection monitoring system to enforce the stop arm law, generally by July 1, 2026, replacing it with a similar one that expressly allows municipalities to adopt ordinances authorizing the use of a monitoring system to enforce the stop arm law and establish \$250 municipal fines for violations ([PA 24-107](#), effective July 1, 2024).

## ***Local Traffic Authorities***

This session, the General Assembly enacted legislation allowing municipalities to create a separate entity to serve as their local traffic authority (LTA) instead of the board of police commissioners or another entity existing law prescribes. Under the new law, any municipality, by vote of its legislative body, may establish an LTA and appoint its members. The municipality’s legislative body also sets the members’ qualifications, terms, and any compensation. An LTA created through this process replaces the entity currently filling this role in the municipality and has the powers and duties the law assigns to LTAs ([PA 24-40](#), §§ 7 & 8, effective July 1, 2024).

## ***Local Voluntary Public Safety Registration System***

A new law eliminates the 2023-enacted local voluntary public safety registration system for children with intellectual disabilities or other developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder, cognitive impairments, and nonverbal learning disorders, as well as related provisions. It correspondingly eliminates a requirement that each emergency dispatcher employed by a public safety answering point, when practicable, search the system when dispatching emergency services to a residential address ([PA 24-81](#), § 37, effective upon passage).

## ***Low-Speed Vehicles***

A new law generally allows “low-speed vehicle” (LSV) operation on highways (i.e., public roads) in the state with speed limits of 25 mph or less. (An LSV is a four-wheeled motor vehicle with a (1) speed attainable in one mile of more than 20 mph but not more than 25 mph on a paved, level surface and (2) gross vehicle weight rating of 3,000 pounds or less.) Under the new law, LSVs are “motor vehicles” for the purpose of state motor vehicle laws, which means, among other things, that they must be registered, titled, and insured and their drivers must be licensed. It also allows the Office of the State Traffic Administration and local traffic authorities to prohibit or limit LSV use on roads under their jurisdictions ([PA 24-20](#), §§ 33-36, effective October 1, 2024).



## ***Parking Authorities and Municipal Parking Regulations***

A new law allows any municipality (rather than only Hartford as under prior law) to adopt an ordinance authorizing its parking authority to enforce municipal parking regulations. As under existing law for Hartford, the ordinance may allow the municipality to remit the funds it receives for parking violations to the authority ([PA 24-40](#), § 52, effective July 1, 2024).

## ***Roaming Livestock***

Existing law prohibits owners or keepers of dogs or livestock from allowing their animals to roam at large on another's land or a public highway when not under their control. A violation is an infraction. Under a new law, animal control officers may seek an order enforcing the law, including an injunction, from Superior Court. Additionally, the new law requires land proprietors to install fences sufficient to contain their livestock to prevent them from roaming at large ([PA 24-105](#), effective upon passage).

## ***Well Testing***

A new law makes various changes to laws on private and semipublic well testing. It specifies that DPH or the local health authority (with DPH's approval) may share test results with certain people, such as the current or prospective property owner. Among other things, it also (1) requires lead testing for newly constructed wells only if the well is for an existing structure and (2) prohibits newly constructed wells from being used for domestic purposes until the local health authority determines that their test results are satisfactory ([PA 24-68](#), § 16, effective upon passage).

This report highlights first responder and law enforcement-related legislation impacting municipalities. For information on other related laws passed in 2024, please see [Acts Affecting Criminal Justice and Public Safety](#) and [Acts Affecting First Responders](#).

## **Utilities and Shared Services**

### ***Joint Appointment of Municipal Officials***

This session, the legislature authorized COGs and municipalities acting jointly to make appointments on a municipality's behalf for municipal functions that are subject to a shared services or regional services agreement. Under the act, these municipal functions include planning activities related to obligations such as local plans of conservation and development, as well as other municipal activities such as land banks, zoning enforcement, tax collection, and fire inspections.



These appointments must apply jointly to each municipality that is a party to the agreement and be instead of the municipality's individual appointment. Under the act, this authority supersedes state and local law, local charters, and home rule ordinances that would prohibit or limit the ability to make these joint appointments ([PA 24-151](#), § 127, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***MDC's Independent Consumer Advocate***

The state's consumer counsel appoints the Metropolitan District Commission's (MDC) independent consumer advocate to advocate for and represent MDC consumers in matters that may affect them, like rates and water quality and supply. This session, the legislature increased, from \$50,000 to \$70,000, the maximum annual amount that MDC must pay for the consumer advocate's costs (unless the advocate shows substantial need for more funds and MDC's board approves them).

The legislature also (1) expanded who can qualify as the consumer advocate to include a Connecticut attorney with legal experience in municipal, environmental, or public utility law and policy, rather than just one with private legal experience in public utility law and policy; (2) removed the requirement that the consumer counsel appoint the advocate by November in advance of the advocate's term; and (3) gave the consumer counsel discretion to change the advocate's term length, start date, and expiration date if there is a vacancy or it is in MDC's consumers' best interests ([PA 24-98](#), effective July 1, 2024).

### ***South Central Connecticut Water Authority (RWA) Charter Changes***

This year, the legislature made various changes to RWA's governing charter to contemplate the acquisition of Aquarion Water Company or its subsidiaries, including giving RWA specific authority to borrow or bond for this purpose. Upon the acquisition, the law creates a state-chartered regional water authority and generally gives the new Aquarion Water Authority the same powers and structure as RWA, including giving both authorities the same governing board.

The legislature also made other changes to RWA's charter, which are not contingent upon the above-mentioned acquisition, including (1) expanding allowable noncore activities; (2) modifying how its governing boards operate (e.g., compensation, weighted votes, quorum, meeting frequency); (3) adjusting how bonding, delinquent assessments, and aggrievements are handled; and (4) requiring online posting of annual financial statements ([SA 24-7](#) and [SB 501, JSS](#), §§ 34-42, effective upon passage).

## Miscellaneous

### *Agents for the Elderly*

By law, municipalities must appoint a municipal agent for the elderly to help seniors learn about community resources and file for benefits. This session, the legislature made the agents' duties mandatory and specifically included helping seniors access resources on housing opportunities, including information on accessing elderly housing waiting lists, applications, and consumer reports. This new law also requires the Department of Aging and Disability Services, by January 1, 2025, to create a directory of these municipal agents that includes their names and titles, phone numbers, and email and mailing addresses, and have it posted on the department's website ([PA 24-39](#), § 17, effective October 1, 2024).

### *Local Charter Amendments*

Last year, the legislature passed a law prohibiting municipalities from amending certain aspects of their charters dealing with municipal powers and planning and zoning matters. But this session, the legislature enacted a law loosening the prohibition in two ways. First, it allows municipalities to amend their charters to separate combined planning and zoning commissions, combine separate commissions into one, or specify the compositions of these commissions. Second, it generally allows municipalities that adopted, before July 1, 2023, a voting threshold for eminent domain processes or disposing of municipal property to continue to enforce the threshold or reduce it ([PA 24-51](#), effective October 1, 2024).

### *Pesticides in Railroad Rights-of-Way*

The legislature passed a new law changing the requirements for railroads that apply pesticide to their rights-of-way. Specifically, it (1) expands the types of information for inclusion in the vegetation management plans they annually submit to DOT and each town in which they will apply pesticide in the coming year; (2) requires them to also develop, subject to public comment, yearly operational plans with, among other things, maps showing the rights-of-way and difficult-to-identify sensitive areas and information about the herbicides that will be applied; and (3) imposes method- and area-specific restrictions on applications in their rights-of-way, such as those occurring near public surface water sources, private wells, or wetlands. Under the new law, a violation of the above requirements is subject to a fine of up to \$90 and DEEP and DOT are authorized to enforce the application restrictions, but within available resources ([PA 24-9](#), effective July 1, 2024).

## ***Sewer Grant Program for Hartford Residents***

The Hartford Sewerage System Repair and Improvement Fund program gives financial assistance to eligible Hartford residents and property owners for damages caused by flooding on or after January 1, 2021. This year, the legislature passed a law that, among other things, (1) caps grants for damage to property that an applicant used for business purposes at \$50,000; (2) generally limits grant eligibility to those who request a sewer backup prevention assessment from MDC by April 30, 2025; and (3) creates a process for judge trial referees (rather than the comptroller) to hear appeals of decisions about grant eligibility or grant amounts ([PA 24-81](#), §§ 23 & 24, effective upon passage).

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