

2017 Major Issues

2016-R-0296 | December 9, 2016



To Our Readers

Every year, legislative leaders ask the Office of Legislative Research (OLR) to identify and provide brief descriptions of important issues that the General Assembly may face in the upcoming session.

This report represents the professional, nonpartisan views of staff in OLR, the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), and the Legislative Commissioners' Office (LCO) on possible upcoming legislative issues. 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 matter knowledge.

OLR compiled this report on the major issues for the 2017 session in consultation with OFA and LCO. OLR analysts wrote the issue descriptions below, except for the Appropriations Committee description, which OFA provided.

We list the issues according to the committee in whose jurisdiction they primarily fall. Because more than one committee may consider aspects of the same issue, descriptions may overlap. Where appropriate, we provide links to OLR reports and other online documents that contain additional information.

Contents

Aging	2
Appropriations	2
Banks.....	4
Children.....	4
Commerce.....	5
Education	6
Energy and Technology	7
Environment	7
Finance, Revenue and Bonding.....	9
General Law.....	10
Government Administration and Elections	11
Higher Education and Employment Advancement	12
Housing.....	12
Human Services.....	12
Insurance and Real Estate	13
Judiciary.....	14
Labor and Public Employees	15
Planning and Development.....	16
Public Health	17
Public Safety and Security.....	18
Transportation	19
Veterans' Affairs.....	20

Aging

Aging in Place

Like many states, Connecticut is confronting a growing elderly population, high nursing home Medicaid costs, and an increasing desire among seniors to remain in their own homes while receiving care (i.e., “aging in place”). In 2017, the legislature may again consider proposals intended to reduce the number of people in institutions and increase the number served by home- and community-based services as part of an overall effort to “rebalance” Connecticut’s long-term care system.

Aging in place proposals may include (1) home modification grants to help seniors pay for home renovations, such as installing ramps and stair lifts and (2) modifying zoning laws to allow temporary health structures (i.e., “granny pods” or “modular medical homes”) to be placed on single-family properties without special-use permits required under local zoning ordinances.

Appropriations

FY 17 General Fund

On November 15, 2016, OFA projected a General Fund deficit of \$77.5 million. The adopted FY 17 budget included a balance of \$22.7 million. The deficit resulted from a \$45.9 million decrease in net revenue coupled with projected deficiencies of \$54.3 million in five agencies.

FY 18 – FY 20 General Fund

Using newly required methodology, OFA determined that reductions in non-fixed costs of \$1.2 billion are necessary in FY 18 to balance General Fund expenditures with consensus revenue projections. Non-fixed costs total \$9.1 billion in FY 18 and will need to be reduced by 13%. Fixed costs are anticipated to grow by \$898.7 million in FY 18 primarily due to an increase in (1) debt service payments by \$244.6 million, (2) Teachers’ Retirement System contributions by \$297.4 million, and (3) pension contributions and retiree health for state employees by \$192.3 million.

The FY 18 expenditure reduction of \$1.2 billion is assumed into FY 19 and FY 20, which significantly reduces expenditures in those years and contributes to positive balance in FY 19 and FY 20. Table one summarizes the FY 17 through FY 20 General Fund estimates.

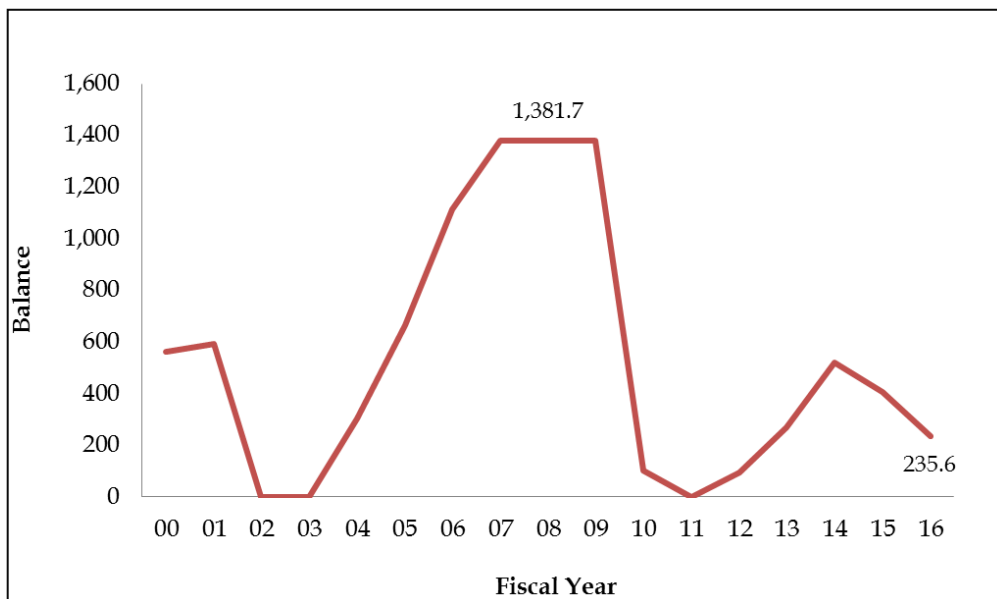
Table 1: FY 17-FY 20 General Fund Estimates (in millions of dollars)

Category	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Revenues				
○ November Consensus Revenue	17,840.8	17,651.1	18,014.6	18,465.7
Expenditures				
● Previous Year Expenditure	-	17,918.3	17,651.1	17,930.2
● Teachers' Pension & Retiree Health	-	297.4	46.4	47.8
● Debt Service	-	244.6	(65.8)	155.7
● State Employee Pension & Retiree Health	-	192.3	122.9	98.6
● Medicaid & Other Entitlements	-	176.9	175.4	183.5
● Adjudicated Claims	-	(12.5)	0.1	(0.3)
Subtotal	-	898.7	279.1	485.3
Expenditure Reduction per PA 16-3 MSS	-	(1,165.9)	-	-
Subtotal	17,918.3	17,651.1	17,930.2	18,415.5
BALANCE	(77.5)	-	84.4	50.2

Budget Reserve Fund

Over 30 years ago, the legislature established a Budget Reserve (i.e. “Rainy Day”) Fund (BRF). During FY 07 through FY 09, the fund contained approximately \$1.4 billion, its highest amount. The BRF’s current balance is \$235.6 million. Table 2 displays the BRF ending balance fluctuations from FY 00 through FY 16.

Table 2: BRF Fiscal Year Ending Balances FY 00-FY 16 (in millions of dollars)



Read OFA's report:

- [OFA Fiscal Accountability Report: FY 17-FY 20](#), November 15, 2016

Banks

Reverse Mortgages

[PA 14-89](#) established a task force to study reverse mortgages, including consumer protection issues, and report its findings and recommendations to the Banking Committee in January 2015. The report prompted the legislature to consider related bills in 2015 ([HB 6801](#)) and 2016 ([SB 163](#)). These bills, which both died in the Senate, generally established counseling requirements for lenders (e.g., Connecticut banks and credit unions) to meet before (1) accepting final and completed reverse mortgage loan applications or (2) assessing fees for these mortgages. During the 2017 legislative session, the legislature may again consider these measures and other related proposals.

Read OLR's report:

- [2014-R-0271](#), *Reverse Mortgage Counseling Requirements*

Read the Task Force report:

- [Reverse Mortgage Task Force: Recommendations](#), January 2015

Children

Juan F. Consent Decree

For over 25 years, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has operated under a consent decree resulting from a 1989 lawsuit (*Juan F.*). The suit charged DCF's predecessor agency with failing to provide necessary services for children and youth who were previously or are currently at risk of being abused or neglected. The consent decree called for a number of reforms and a court monitor to oversee them.

In 2004, the court approved an "exit plan" enabling DCF to end the court monitoring if it achieved 22 benchmarks for at least six months. In September 2016, the court ordered a revised exit plan that would (1) end oversight of benchmarks DCF has achieved and (2) set a new exit path. It also set a floor for DCF's budget that must be maintained as part of the exit plan. This revised plan will take effect unless the legislature votes to reject it before mid-February.

Next session, the Children’s Committee must send the exit plan to the legislature for approval or rejection.

Read OLR’s report:

- [2012-R-0461](#), *OLR Backgrounder: Juan F. Consent Decree*

Child Abuse and Neglect

In October 2016, 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 foster care with a relative. According to the report, the investigation raised “widespread systemic concerns” about the department’s relative foster care placement practices. In 2017, the Children’s Committee will likely review these practices as well as the processes by which DCF investigates reports of abuse and neglect and consider related legislation.

Read OLR’s report:

- [2016-R-0209](#), *Child Abuse or Neglect Investigations*

Commerce

Return on Investment of Economic Development Deals

Providing businesses with financial assistance and tax breaks is one way states try to boost or sustain the economy when economic growth is sluggish. The Department of Economic and Community Development’s (DECD) recent study on Connecticut’s flagship economic development program, First Five Plus, found that (1) businesses the program funded are generating sales and personal income tax revenue that exceeds the value of the assistance they received and (2) money their new employees and suppliers spend stimulate additional economic growth.

This session, the legislature may continue to explore the effectiveness of these types of initiatives, including how they stimulate the economy and compare with other types of state investment, such as widening highways, retaining displaced workers, or helping college graduates start new businesses.

Read DECD’s study:

- [First Five Plus Program: Return on Investment Analysis](#), August 2016

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0003](#), *Job Creation by Startups and Young Companies*
- [2016-R-0171](#), *Connecticut Bioscience Innovation Fund*

Education

CCJEF v. Rell Court Decision

In September 2016, the Connecticut Superior Court issued a long-awaited decision in the ongoing *Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) v. Rell* school funding civil lawsuit. The court ruled that the state did not meet its constitutional obligation to provide an adequate education to public school students in the following areas: (1) intervening in struggling school districts when local government falters; (2) distributing education aid; (3) defining elementary and secondary education; (4) setting standards for hiring, firing, evaluating, and paying teachers; and (5) funding special education, identifying eligible students, and delivering services.

The attorney general is appealing the decision before Connecticut's Supreme Court. The court will likely issue its decision after the 2017 legislative session ends.

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.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0177](#), *OLR Backgrounder: CCJEF v. Rell*
- [2016-R-0306](#), *Issue Brief: CCJEF v. Rell Court Decision*
- [2010-R-0527](#), *OLR Backgrounder: CCJEF v. Rell (Supreme Court decision)*

Read the court decision:

- [CCJEF v. Rell](#)

Increased Legislative Authority under the Every Student Succeeds Act

In 2015, Congress reauthorized the law commonly known as the "No Child Left Behind Act". This new law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), shifts education policy making authority in various areas from the federal government to states.

This session, the State Department of Education (SDE) must consult with the legislature when developing its accountability plans (i.e., Title I plans). ESSA now requires the department to develop them with timely and meaningful consultation from the legislature.

The new Title I plans, which must be fully implemented in the 2017-18 school year, govern various policy areas, such as (1) academic standards and assessments, (2) the statewide accountability system, and (3) identifying schools in need of support and improvement.

Read OLR's report:

- [2015-R-0300](#): *Summary of Federal Every Student Succeeds Act, The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*

For more information:

- [ESSA: Quick Guides on Top Issues](#); Education Commission of the States, August 2016

Energy and Technology

Nuclear Plants

Nuclear plant closures around the country have prompted states to consider ways to help struggling nuclear plants to compete in energy markets.

During a 2016 forum on the future of nuclear power in Connecticut, officials from Connecticut's only nuclear plant, Millstone, testified that while they did not anticipate short-term closure, they noted increasing operational challenges.

Last session, the Senate passed [SB 344](#), which would have generally allowed the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to require electric distribution companies (i.e., Eversource and United Illuminating) to enter into long-term contracts to purchase power, capacity, or renewable energy certificates from certain types of power generating facilities, including nuclear plants. In 2017, the legislature may again consider proposals on this issue.

Environment

Poultry Flocks

During the 2016 legislative session, the Environment Committee favorably reported [sHB 5312](#), which would have established a voluntary registration program for poultry flock owners, enabling them to participate in the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). The

NPIP is a cooperative industry, state, and federal program that seeks to prevent, detect, and contain infectious and contagious diseases, such as avian influenza. Legislators may revisit this concept again in 2017 as the state continues to seek ways to control the spread of avian diseases.

State Park Funding

This past summer, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) implemented mandatory budget cuts that resulted in reductions to state park services, including reduced lifeguard and maintenance staffing, closing three campgrounds after the July 4 weekend, and adjusting park operating days and hours.

In recent years, the legislature passed laws ([PA 15-106](#) and [PA 16-5](#)) aimed at increasing funding for the park and forest system. Among other things, these laws required DEEP to (1) set fees for renting park property for certain special events based on the number of attendees; (2) issue a request for information (RFI) on operating concessions, providing services, and offering recreational amenities at parks; and (3) provide to the Environment Committee, by January 1, 2017, copies of RFI responses and a report on per-person admission fees.

Given the anticipated budget deficit, this session the legislature may continue to explore ways to fund state parks and forests.

Read OLR's report:

- [2016-R-0297](#), *Issue Brief: State Park Financing*

Read the Program Review and Investigation Committee's report:

- [State Parks and Forests: Funding](#), January 2014

Wildlife Habituation

In 2016, the Environment Committee favorably reported [sHB 5315](#), which would have expanded DEEP's regulatory authority to include prohibiting or restricting the feeding of "potentially dangerous animals" on property not owned by the state. The House amended the bill by, among other things, limiting the bill's scope to bears and coyotes. Given continued media reports of sightings and encounters with these animals, the Environment Committee may consider similar legislation in 2017.

Finance, Revenue and Bonding

Improving the State's Business Climate

This session, the legislature may consider tax proposals aimed at improving the state's business climate by stimulating the kind of new business investment and job creation that increases tax revenue without increasing tax rates. These proposals may 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 current portfolio of business tax incentives to specific high-growth industries.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2015-R-0208](#), *Connecticut's Business Climate Rankings*
- [2016-R-0256](#), *State Tax Changes 2011-2016*
- [2016-R-0252](#), *Comparison of Tax Rates in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island*

For more information:

- [Connecticut Economic Competitiveness Diagnostic](#), Presentation to the Commission for Economic Competitiveness, April 8, 2016
- [State Tax Panel Final Report](#), December 31, 2015

Realigning the State's Tax Structure to the New Economy

The new economy, also called the "digital economy," is creating new types of digital products, services, and transactions that do not neatly align with the state's current tax structure. Consequently, in 2017 the legislature may consider proposals to realign the state's tax structure to reflect the new economy's shift away from business transactions occurring in stores or over the telephone. Proposals may include (1) expanding the range of digital services and goods subject to sales and use taxes, (2) better capturing sales and use taxes from out-of-state sellers, (3) addressing tax compliance issues arising from evolving business models (e.g., cloud computing or virtual currencies), and (4) evaluating the applicability of existing tax incentives.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0293](#), *Issue Brief: Transportation Network Companies*

- [2016-R-0308](#), *Room Occupancy Tax on Airbnb*
- [2015-R-0104](#), *Sales and Use Tax Exemptions*
- [2013-R-0290](#), *Issue Brief: Taxing the Digital Economy*
- [2013-R-0298](#), *The “Sharing Economy” and Public Policy*

For more information:

- [“Taxation and Today’s Digital Economy.”](#) *Journal of Tax Practice & Procedure*. April-May 2015.
- *Disrupting State and Local Tax Systems*, *State Tax Notes*, May 11, 2015 (available in the legislative library)

General Law

Minimum Alcohol Pricing

Connecticut law generally prohibits off-premises retailers (primarily package and grocery stores) from selling any kind of alcoholic beverage below cost and prescribes how “cost” must be calculated for this purpose. (The law allows these retailers to discount one item for sale below cost each month.)

The minimum pricing laws have been the subject of significant debate in recent years and there is also an ongoing lawsuit against the state alleging that the minimum pricing laws are anti-competitive and violate federal antitrust laws. The governor has proposed several bills to repeal or amend them, the most recent being [SB 14](#) in 2016. Lawmakers may again consider such proposals in 2017.

Read OLR’s reports:

- [2009-R-0171](#), *Minimum Pricing Laws*
- [2012-R-0475](#), *Legislative History of Alcohol Minimum Pricing*

Secondary Market Ticket Resale

The internet has revolutionized the entertainment ticketing industry, causing more event tickets to be sold on the secondary market (i.e., through a third party and not directly by the venue or team). This new way of ticketing has led venues to implement new business practices.

In 2017, the legislature may consider proposals that prohibit anyone from (1) restricting the resale of tickets that were sold in a package, (2) denying access to an event solely because the ticket was resold, (3) using a ticketing system that eliminates the option of making tickets transferrable, or (4) using software designed to avoid security measures when purchasing tickets.

Read OLR's report:

- [2011-R-0346](#), *OLR Backgrounder: Ticket Resale*

Government Administration and Elections

Campaign Finance

In 2016, the Government Administration and Elections Committee favorably reported [sSB 5511](#) that, among other things, would have (1) expanded reporting requirements associated with independent expenditures (e.g., who is subject to disclosure and what information must be disclosed) and (2) created a category of spenders called “coordinated spenders” and defined their expenditures as contributions subject to campaign finance reporting and limits. In 2017, the legislature may consider these and other proposals relating to campaign finance.

Constitutional Restrictions on Election Administration

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. Under the constitution, voters may qualify for an absentee ballot if they will be out of town, they are sick or have a physical disability, or the tenets of their religion prohibit secular activity on election day.

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. A similar proposed amendment appeared on the 2014 general election ballot, but it did not pass.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2012-R-0379](#), *History of Absentee Voting in the State Constitution*
- [2014-R-0221](#), *Ballot Question and Explanatory Text for Proposed Constitutional Amendment*

Higher Education and Employment Advancement

Open Educational Resources

Legislation from 2015 created a task force to study best practices for creating open educational resources (e.g., free resources available under open licenses) in higher education. The task force, which began meeting in 2016, is exploring how to incentivize the creation or adaptation of open educational resources, such as digital textbooks, to reduce the cost of course materials for students. In 2017, the legislature may consider the recommendations from the task force's report as well as other related proposals.

Read related law:

- [SA 15-18](#), *An Act Concerning the Use of Digital Open-Source Textbooks in Higher Education*

Housing

Increasing Access to Affordable Housing

Lack of affordable housing has long been an issue in Connecticut. The legislature is likely to consider how it can expand affordable housing opportunities, especially for groups that might not be served by traditional housing programs, such as seniors who need help with daily living activities and the moderate-income millennial workforce. For example, the legislature may once again take up bills offering tax breaks to recent graduates with student debt to help them afford the state's high housing costs. And considering how many seniors hope to age in place, the legislature might also take up proposals aimed at helping seniors identify non-institutional assisted living arrangements.

Proposals may also aim to make changes to the affordable housing land use appeals procedure ([CGS § 8-30g](#)), a law that requires municipalities to defend their decisions rejecting affordable housing development applications or approving them with costly conditions. This law, which affects suburban and rural communities chiefly, regularly generates competing proposals to modify its provisions.

Human Services

Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS)

A major component of the state's Medicaid spending is LTSS, which include various medical, personal care, social, and support services that help people with chronic illnesses perform activities of daily living. Traditionally, Medicaid paid for LTSS in institutional settings, such as

nursing homes. But in recent years, the state has implemented various aging in place initiatives that have allowed more people to receive LTSS in home- and community-based settings, which are generally much less expensive than institutional care.

During the interim, the Program Review and Investigations (PRI) Committee studied factors that influence the receipt of LTSS in home- and community-based settings. This session, the legislature may consider the recommendations from the final report as well as other proposals related to the state's long-term care system.

Read the PRI report:

- [*Factors Influencing Receipt of Long-Term Care Services and Supports in Home and Community Settings*](#), December 7, 2016

Read OLR's report:

- [*2015-R-0215, Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports*](#)

Read the Connecticut Long-Term Care Planning Committee's report:

- [*Balancing the System: Working Toward Real Choice for LTSS in Connecticut, January 2016*](#)

Insurance and Real Estate

Auto Insurance

Last session, the House passed [sHB 5523](#) which would have established minimum insurance requirements for transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft. This session, the legislature may again consider bills mandating insurance requirements for TNCs.

Additionally, in recent sessions the legislature has attempted to study and regulate the use of telematics data (i.e., monitoring devices that track an insured's driving information). In 2017, the legislature may consider several aspects of telematics, including privacy issues and how the data may be used in determining insurance premiums.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2014-R-0173](#), *Uber's On-Demand Car Service*
- [2015-R-0234](#), *Territorial Rating in Auto Insurance* (discusses telematics as an alternative to territorial ratings)

Insurance Coverage for Substance Use Disorder Treatment

In 2016, the legislature passed laws to help increase health insurance coverage for substance use disorder treatments. For example, [PA 16-43](#) prohibits certain health insurance policies that provide prescription drug coverage for opioid antagonists (i.e., medication to treat a drug overdose) from requiring prior authorization for these drugs.

Additionally, [SA 16-4](#) requires the insurance commissioner to study any impediments that exist for insured people to receive treatment for substance use disorders under their current health insurance policies or benefit plans. She must report her findings to the Insurance and Real Estate and Public Health committees by January 31, 2017. The report may prompt legislators to again consider legislation to expand access to substance use disorder treatments, including requiring health insurers to cover abuse-deterrent opioid analgesics (i.e., prescription painkillers formulated to reduce abuse).

Judiciary

Bail Reform

The Connecticut Sentencing Commission, at the governor's request, has been studying the state's bail system, including ways to avoid pretrial detention of non-violent offenders who may be unable to afford bail. The legislature considered proposals on this topic in 2016 and may do so again in 2017.

Juvenile Justice

In November 2015, Governor Malloy announced several ideas regarding juvenile justice reform, including raising the age of the juvenile justice system's jurisdiction through age 20 instead of age 17. During the 2016 session, the Judiciary Committee favorably reported [sSB 18](#) which would have created a new category of individuals within the juvenile justice system, "young adults," and gradually raised the maximum age of juvenile justice jurisdiction over a three-year period from age 17 to age 20. Both [sSB 18](#) and a similar [bill](#) considered during the May 2016 Special Session died in the Senate. In 2017, the legislature may again consider these measures and other proposals on juvenile justice reform.

Read the Governor's Press Release:

- [November 6, 2015](#), *Governor Malloy's Prepared Remarks Today on Criminal Justice Reform*

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0283](#), *Serious Juvenile Offenses*
- [2016-R-0284](#), *Juvenile Delinquency Procedure*
- [2016-R-0300](#), *Juvenile Justice in Connecticut (Recent Measures)*

Recreational Marijuana

This session, the legislature may consider proposals to (1) legalize the possession of specified quantities of marijuana for recreational use by adults (age 21 and over) and (2) regulate marijuana in a manner similar to alcohol. Eight states have already done so, including Massachusetts and Maine.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0305](#), *Issue Brief: Recreational Marijuana*
- [2016-R-0273](#), *Marijuana Penalties*

Labor and Public Employees

Paid Family and Medical Leave

Over the past two sessions, the Labor Committee has considered expanding the state's family and medical leave act (FMLA) and creating a paid FMLA program to provide limited wage replacement benefits to employees out on the leave. Last February, consultants hired by the Department of Labor (DOL) created a plan for implementing a paid FMLA program and the Labor Committee favorably reported [SB 221](#) based on the plan. The legislature may again consider acting on legislation to expand family and medical leave and provide wage replacement benefits.

Read DOL's report:

- [Implementing Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Connecticut](#), Institute for Women's Policy Research, January 1, 2016

Read OLR's reports:

- [2015-R-0308](#), *Connecticut's Family and Medical Leave Act*
- [2016-R-0030](#), *Paid Family Leave Programs in California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island*

Planning and Development

Fiscal Health of Connecticut's Cities and Towns

Connecticut municipalities, both urban and suburban, are feeling the fiscal pressure of rising costs, decreasing state aid, and property tax bases that are not growing fast enough to make up the difference. This fiscal pressure means that municipalities are faced with the prospect of increasing property taxes to maintain services or reducing or eliminating services altogether. This problem is particularly critical in cities like Hartford, which is facing a large structural deficit and high mill rate that far exceeds the rates in surrounding towns, making it difficult for the city to attract and retain businesses and residents.

In 2017, legislators may examine the structural factors that affect a municipality's long-term ability to fund services without overburdening taxpayers. This may include proposals to (1) diversify municipal revenue sources, (2) encourage regional revenue sharing, (3) adjust state grant funding formulas to equalize fiscal disparities across municipalities, and (4) encourage cities and towns to cut costs by collaborating on activities and delivering services regionally.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0291](#), *Issue Brief: Regionalizing Municipal Services*
- [2013-R-0345](#), *Local Option Taxes*

For more information:

- [Measuring Municipal Fiscal Disparities in Connecticut](#), Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, May 2015

Municipal Spending Cap

In FY 17, municipalities will receive a new municipal revenue sharing grant from the state. Beginning in FY 18, the grant is tied to a municipal spending cap mechanism that reduces grant amounts for municipalities whose spending exceeds the cap. Municipal officials have

been critical of the cap and have proposed repealing it or modifying it to exclude specified types of expenditures. The legislature is likely to debate these options next session.

Read OLR's report:

- [2016-R-0101](#), *Municipal Revenue Sharing Program*

Public Health

Certificate of Need

Hospitals and certain other health care facilities generally must receive a certificate of need (CON) before (1) establishing new facilities or services, (2) changing ownership, (3) acquiring certain equipment, or (4) terminating certain services.

There is debate about whether CON programs accomplish their objectives of reducing health care costs while ensuring access to high-quality care. Earlier this year, the governor created a task force to study the state's CON system (2016 Executive Order No. 51). The taskforce must (1) perform a comprehensive review of the existing system, (2) identify any challenges or gaps in the state's efforts to regulate health care services and facilities, and (3) recommend associated improvements. Based on task force recommendations or other proposals, the legislature may consider revising the state's CON laws.

For more information:

- [Governor's Certificate of Need Task Force](#)

Prescription Opioid Drug Abuse

Like many other states, Connecticut is facing an increase in the number of emergency room visits and drug overdose deaths involving opioid analgesics (e.g., prescription painkillers such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and fentanyl).

In recent years, the legislature has passed several measures to address prescription opioid drug abuse, such as (1) increasing access to opioid antagonists (i.e., medication to treat a drug overdose); (2) enacting "Good Samaritan" laws for people who prescribe or administer opioid antagonists to a person experiencing a drug overdose; and (3) establishing a seven-day limit on certain opioid drug prescriptions.

This session, the legislature may consider additional proposals to address this issue, such as allowing pharmacies to sell opioid antagonists directly to consumers without a prescription and further modifying practitioners' prescribing practices.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0295](#), *Issue Brief: Prescription Opioid Drug Abuse*
- [2016-R-0143](#), *Connecticut's Opioid Drug Abuse Laws*
- [2014-R-0233](#), *Prescription Drug Abuse*
- [2014-R-0236](#), *State Strategies for Addressing Prescription Drug Abuse*

Public Safety and Security

Casino Gaming

[SA 15-7](#) created, among other things, a process for the possible establishment of an off-reservation casino operated by the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan tribes, through a jointly owned business entity. The tribes are currently evaluating site proposals from five municipalities (East Hartford, East Windsor, Hartford, South Windsor, and Windsor Locks). But to build such a casino, the tribes will need authorizing legislation.

Read related law:

- [SA 15-7](#), *An Act Concerning Gaming*

Showing Gun Permit

The law requires a gun permit holder to carry his or her permit when carrying a handgun. If a law enforcement officer sees the permittee carrying a handgun and has a reasonable suspicion of a crime, the officer can request to see the permit to verify its validity or the permittee's identity. Under these circumstances, the permittee must present his or her permit ([CGS § 29-35\(b\)](#)).

In 2016, the Public Safety and Security Committee considered [HB 5408](#), under which a permittee would have to show his or her permit to any law enforcement officer who sees him or her openly carrying a handgun and asks to see the permit. The legislature may again see proposals on this issue in 2017.

Drones

The private, commercial, and government use of drones continues to expand and attract public attention around the country. A drone (also called an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) or unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)) is an aircraft controlled by computers located in the aircraft or remotely by someone on the ground or in another vehicle. Many people raise

privacy and safety concerns and question the appropriate use of drones by government agencies.

In 2017, 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 is not considered in “plain view” for the purposes of voyeurism crimes.

Read OLR’s reports:

- [2014-R-0132](#), *Information on the 2012 Federal Aviation Administration Modernization and Reform Act*
- [2014-R-0137](#), *Privacy Protections Implicated by the Domestic Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles or Drones*

Transportation

Transportation Lockbox

Legislators are likely to again consider approving a transportation “lockbox” to secure transportation funding. In December 2015, the legislature approved a constitutional amendment requiring that certain Special Transportation Fund revenue sources be secured in a figurative lockbox and prohibiting the legislature from using those funds for non-transportation purposes. While the amendment won unanimous Senate approval, it failed to win in the House by the three-fourths vote needed to place it on the November 2016 ballot.

If the legislature approves the constitutional amendment again 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.

Read the proposed amendment:

- [RA 15-1, December Special Session](#), *Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Protect Transportation Funds*

Tolling

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is studying the possibility of using tolls to better manage traffic flow on I-95 between the New York border and New Haven and on I-84 in Hartford. Depending on the study’s results, the legislature may again consider proposals to implement tolling this year.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0276](#), *Results of I-95 Congestion Tolling Study*
- [2015-R-0048](#), *Questions About Tolling in Connecticut*

Mileage-Based User Fees (MBUF)

DOT has received federal approval to take part in a multi-state study on using MBUF to replace the gas tax as a transportation funding mechanism. Under a MBUF system, drivers pay a set rate for each mile they drive. The legislature may consider the issue during the 2017 session, although a number of legislators have raised concerns about this concept.

Read OLR's reports:

- [2016-R-0140](#), *Mileage-Based User Fee Grant Application*
- [2012-R-0029](#), *Vehicle Miles Travelled Transportation Funding*

Veterans' Affairs

Aid and Benefits

This session, 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 the higher education tuition waiver program for veterans to include additional fees, such as summer school fees; and (3) exempting specific groups of veterans from certain fees (e.g., exempting disabled veterans from special license plate fees).

Read OLR's report:

- [2016-R-0112](#), *Veterans' Benefits*

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