

For assistance with:

Filing your taxes, tax credits and rebates

For help with your federal taxes, call the IRS toll-free at **1-800-829-1040**.

For help with your state return, call the State Department of Revenue Services helpline at **(860) 297-5962**.



Be sure to ask about the numerous tax credits available to residents who file federal and state tax returns. For example, homeowners are eligible for a state property tax credit worth up to \$500.

Elderly and disabled renters

You may also be eligible for tax rebates. Apply between May 15 and September 15. Call Waterbury Social Services at **597-4000**.

Elderly and disabled homeowners

You may be eligible for the **Circuit Breaker Tax Relief Program**. Apply between February 1 and May 15. Please call the tax assessor's office to inquire: **574-6828**.

Home Repair Program for Seniors

The Home Solutions program is a service that provides financial support for house repairs, hazardous material abatement, septic system repair, removal or enlargement, and emergency repairs for senior citizens. The funding for this program comes from a state-wide combined loan and grant program. The funds are provided by the State of Connecticut through the Department of Economic and Community Development and are given to both residential owner occupied and rental properties. For more information, call Home Solutions at **(860) 347-4465**.



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State Representative Jeffrey J. Berger

Representing the 73rd District
Waterbury



News from the Capitol

Protecting our Homes and our Families

Many of you have contacted me regarding the tragic crimes committed in Cheshire last summer. During a recently held special session of the General Assembly, the legislature adopted a criminal justice reform package in response to this horrific event.

This reform package was the result of a series of recommendations made by the legislature's Judiciary Committee and a task force formed by the Governor. The proposals were also subject to public hearings and serious debate in both the House and Senate. It is my hope that this legislation will make a real difference in improving our justice system, particularly parole policies, and make our towns safer. Included are the following:



- Establishing a new crime of "home invasion," which will be considered a violent crime
- Re-working our state's persistent offender statutes ("three strikes law") so that they are more usable for prosecutors
- Creating a full time parole board and expanding its staff to include both victim advocates and a forensic psychologist
- Establishing tougher and more secure re-entry procedures for offenders returning to the community after completion of their sentence
- Creating a new computer system for sharing criminal justice information among law enforcement agencies, the Judicial Branch, and related agencies
- Enhancing the crime victim notification law
- Limiting the reasons that the Department of Correction can grant furloughs to inmates
- Increasing supervised residential placements for sex offenders who have completed their sentences
- Expanding the use of global positioning system (GPS) monitoring of parolees

Questions?

Contact me at Jeffrey.Berger@cga.ct.gov
1-800-842-8267 or (860) 240-8585

Jessica's Law Enacted To Toughen Sentences For Child Sex Predators



The General Assembly unanimously passed legislation commonly known as "Jessica's Law" that is designed to give prosecutors and police the tools necessary to send child sex predators to prison for a long time. This legislation will create a new crime of "aggravated sexual assault of a minor" for adults who commit a sex offense against a child under the age of 13 and will carry a mandatory minimum prison term of 25 years for a first offense and 50 years for a second offense. This crime would be triggered by any child sex predator who, for example, kidnaps, restrains, stalks, or causes serious injury to the victim; commits the same offense against more than one victim; or has been previously convicted of sexual assault.

In addition, the legislation also sets a new mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years for anyone who possesses or imports child pornography, has sexual contact with a child under age 13, or entices a minor into sexual contact through the use of a computer or the Internet. A 10-year minimum sentence will be set for anyone who employs a minor in an obscene performance. While all of these acts are already crimes, this legislation sets new mandatory minimum sentences under which predators will be sent to prison. (Public Act 07-143)

Teen Driving

The State of Connecticut places several restrictions on teenage drivers; however, study after study has shown that teens are involved in a disproportionate number of vehicle crashes. Our community in Waterbury has experienced too many painful tragedies involving our young people. Fatal car crashes involving teen drivers are putting new momentum behind state efforts to revisit laws pertaining to teen drivers. I am a member of a legislative task force that is planning to examine the need for new legislation to toughen teenage driving laws. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I am looking forward to a discussion with my fellow lawmakers on topics related to reckless driving, driving under the influence and driving with excessive speed in an attempt to make driving safer for teens.

