LEGISLATIVE SESSION & BUDGET BRIEFING

Monday, February 10 | 3:30PM - 4:30PM

PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES



Sean Ghio
Partnership for Strong Communities



Bill Welz
Gallo & Robinson

AGENDA



WELCOME

SESSION OVERVIEW AND PROPOSED BUDGET

PARTNERSHIP LEGISLATIVE AGENDA OVERVIEW

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVOCACY

AUDIENCE Q&A AND WRAP UP

Here For Housing

Session Update – Partnership for Strong Communities

WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT TO EXPECT

GALLO & ROBINSON GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

2024 Election Results

The State House of Representatives following the election was **102(D) – 49(R)**

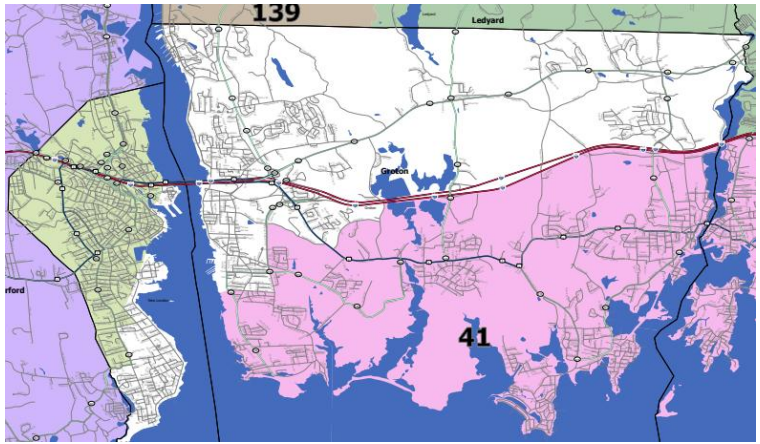
- Democrats added four seats to their majority. They now have a veto proof majority.
- Rep. Matt Ritter, Speaker of the House.
- Rep. Jason Rojas, House Majority Leader.
- Rep. Vin Candelora, House Minority Leader

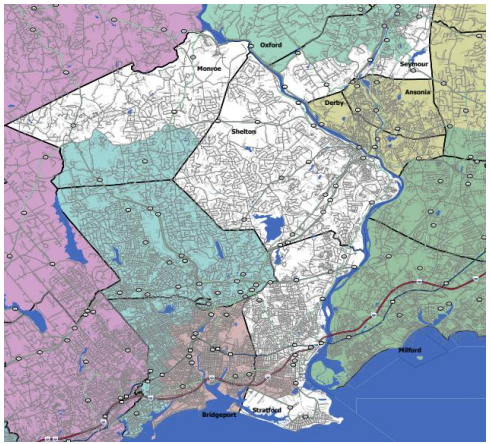
The State Senate following the election was **25(D) – 11 (R)**.

- Democrats added one seat to their majority. They continue to have a veto proof majority.
- Sen. Martin Looney, Sen. Pro Tempore
- Sen. Bob Duff, Majority Leader
- Sen. Stephen Harding, Minority Leader.

Special Elections

- Two legislators did not take the oath creating vacancies in each chamber
- State Rep. Chris Conley (D-Groton) and Sen. Kevin Kelly (R-Stratford) took other state jobs so those seats are open until a February 26th election.





2025 Legislative Session

WHAT TO EXPECT THIS SESSION

- Advocacy in a “long" session
  - 22 weeks long - January 8th through June 4th, 2025
  - This is a budget setting year.
    - Create biennium budget based on most current data/info available from tax revenue, expenditures and federal Funds received
  - Legislators could propose any legislation they wish by January 17th
    - All other bills must be raised by the Committees, the Governor, or be emergency certification bills
  - The rules for the session were adopted on opening day.

IMPORTANT SESSION TIMELINE:

- State of the State Address: **January 8th**
- Governor's Budget: **February 5th**
- Appropriations Hearings: **February11th-26th**
  - Finance Committee Deadline: **April 24th**
  - Appropriations Committee Deadline: **April 25th**
- Housing Committee JF Deadline: **March 11th**
- Planning and Development Committee JF Deadline: **March 31st**
- Last day of session: **June 4th, 2025**

Hearing Dates of Note:

- Just Cause Eviction – **Tuesday, February 18th**
- Appropriations – Conservation and Development Subcommittee Hearing on Budget – **Wednesday, February 26th at 4:30PM**
- Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Hearing on Governor's Bond Bill : **TBA**

Current Budget Projections

- Surplus for days(!)
  - FY 2023 – *Ended June 30, 2023*

Surplus of $551.1 million*

  - FY 2024 – Ended June 30, 2024

Surplus of $400.9 million*

  - FY 2025 – Ends June 30, 2025

*Project Surplus of $443 million**

**General Fund – not including the State's Transportation Fund*

- OFA is projecting surpluses continuing in the out years):
  - FY 2026 – projected surplus of $373.4 million.
  - FY 2027 – projected surplus of $791.8 million.
  - FY 2028 – projected surplus of $1,294.7 million

HOUSING IN THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

Click here for additional details and information

Headline: Housing is a valuable tool in driving affordability and opportunity in Connecticut

Budget proposal maintains bonding resources

- **$800M in proposed new authorizations over the biennium** -- including $650M for HTF and FLEX with an increased focus on FLEX program (targeting units for households below 100% AMI).

Increases for Rental Assistance

- **Estimated $26.1M in new RAP funding over the biennium, with an estimated $8.7M annually** to keep pace with rising rents and a stated $8.7M starting in FY27 to serve 700 additional households - 425 elderly and disabled renters at high risk of homelessness and 275 families with young children through HeadStart on Housing.

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HOUSING IN THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

Dept of Housing (DOH)

- **$90k** for one new position for the DOH Asset Management Unit
- **$5M annually** for Opportunity HUBs and eviction prevention in Housing/Homeless Services line item
- **$8.7M** beginning FY27 to expand RAP in Housing/Homeless Services line item
- **Baseline adjustments of $10.3M (FY26) and $10.5M (FY27) to adjust funding for increased housing costs** across various programs, and $613k annually for a 3% private provider COLA

Dept of Economic and Community Development (DECD)

- **$500k (FY26) and $700k (FY27) and annually thereafter to the Municipal Redevelopment Authority (MDRA)** for operating expenses to enable economic development projects outside of Capital Region

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HOUSING BILLS PROPOSED BY GOVERNOR LAMONT

- **SB 1248: An Act Expanding Consumer Protections**—Proposes requiring "all-in pricing," on the front end of a priced quote and price transparency from all businesses, corporations, and landlords. Landlords would be required to disclose any fees up front in advertising and in conversations with tenants.
- **SB 1252: An Act Establishing Priority Housing Development Zones**—Proposes to remove specific local barriers to housing development in exchange for offering municipalities an easier path to a moratorium under Section 8-30g, the state's Affordable Housing Appeals law.
- **SB 1245: An Act Establishing a Resilient Connecticut Strategy**—Proposes policies to prepare and respond to the impacts of climate change by development to less risky areas. Further review is needed to evaluate any potential effects on overall housing supply and, specifically, the creation and preservation of affordable housing.

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PSC POLICY PRIORITIES

AFFORDABILITY

CREATION

CHOICE

STABILITY

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AFFORDABILITY

Improve and expand funding for the State Rental Assistance Program (RAP) by at least **$20M per year** to avoid program deficits and support our lowest income families to afford a place to call home while meeting their other basic needs.



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RENTAL ASSISTANT PROGRAM FUNDING

Governor's budget does not include any additional funding for RAP vouchers in FY26.

FY27: Over 425 new vouchers for elderly and disabled - intended to support most at risk for homelessness due to fixed income.

FY27: 275 new vouchers for Headstart on Housing – hardest to serve families who have multiple barriers to housing.
Proposal suggests additional investment in FY28.

Families need additional housing vouchers now. **We advocate for phasing in the additional funding proposed for FY27 to FY26.**

NEED

↑ Statewide **rents have increased 29%** since 2021, driving a **28% increase in the average cost of a RAP voucher.**

! Current funding for RAP is insufficient, with a **$5.6M deficit so far this year** due to rising rents.

Allocate RAP expansion funding in FY26

A delay in additional funding means a delay in relief for families and vulnerable renters who are experiencing homelessness—or at great risk of entering homelessness without support now.

Issuing a voucher, locating an available and affordable home, and the lease-up process take time.

We also support creating an **income disregard** for earnings of employed, non-head of household young adults, **ages 18 to 26**.

Including a young adult's income in total household income can result in a household suddenly no longer being eligible for RAP (benefits cliff) or cause an increase in the amount the household must pay for rent. As a result, young adults may refrain from entering the workforce.

RAP FUNDING AND APPROPRIATIONS HEARING

Appropriations – Conservation and Development Subcommittee Hearing

Wednesday, February 26th at 4:30PM

Watch for our **Action Alert** ahead of the hearing.

CT RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (RAP)

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- **Expand funding for the State Rental Assistance Program by $20M** in each year of the budget to the Housing/Homeless Services account, including:
  - **$11.5M each year to keep pace** with continued rent increases and avoid program serving 15% less families.
  - **$8.5M each year to serve an additional 650 low-income families** experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity and those in need of supportive housing.
- Improve program data reporting to include aggregated applicant data by race and familial status to better understand the need, use, and effectiveness.

NEED

Statewide **rents have increased 29%** since 2021, driving a **28% increase in the average cost of a RAP voucher.**

Current funding for RAP is insufficient, with a **$5.6M deficit so far this year** due to rising rents.

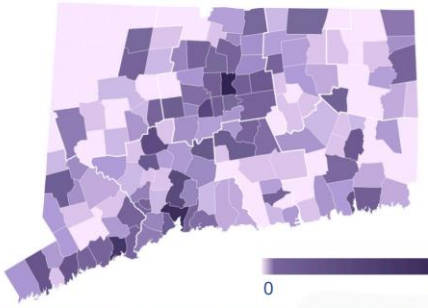
Over 120,000 CT renter households, majority Black and Latino, **spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs**.

Housing cost burden increases families' risk of eviction and homelessness. CT's 2024 Point-In-Time Count reported **3,410 individuals experiencing homelessness**, a 13% rise from 2023--with 44% being children and those over 55.

A renter must earn $34.54/hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment, far above the $22.30/hour average renter wage.

HOUSEHOLDS WITH STATE RENTAL ASSISTANCE BY TOWN

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This map illustrates the distribution of households receiving State Rental Assistance Program (RAP) benefits across Connecticut towns as of October 2024. An interactive map is available here.

RAP provides critical support to low-income households by helping them afford safe and stable housing in their communities. The shading intensity represents the number of households benefiting from RAP in each town, with darker shades indicating a higher concentration of recipients.

CREATION

Invest in the creation and preservation of more affordable homes by maintaining investments in the **Housing Trust Fund** at $200M per year and the Affordable **Housing Program (FLEX)** at $250M per year, including $150M for rental homes affordable to our state's lowest income families.

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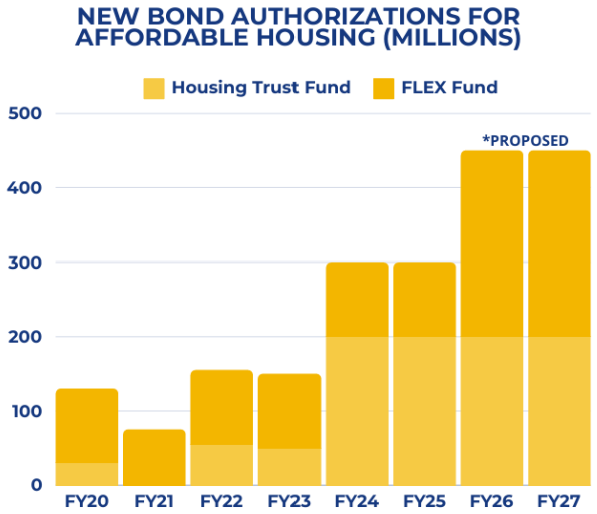
MAINTAINING STATE BONDING RESOURCES

Governor's proposal maintains bonding resources

- **$800M in proposed new authorizations over the biennium** -- including $650M for HTF and FLEX with an increased focus on FLEX program.
- More state funding should target building affordable homes for Connecticut's lowest income families with the greatest housing needs.

Connecticut has a **gap of approximately 92,560** affordable homes available to extremely low income renter households.

Only **34 affordable homes are available for every 100 households** earning below 30% of Area Median Income, leaving **over 70% without an affordable home.**



CHOICE

Support legislation that ensures a **variety of housing types in all communities** so more residents can choose where and how they live. This includes passing **Work Live Ride** to expand housing options near transit centers and **strengthening mechanisms** to challenge a municipality that has denied the development of new affordable housing without sufficient reason.



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PASS WORK LIVE RIDE

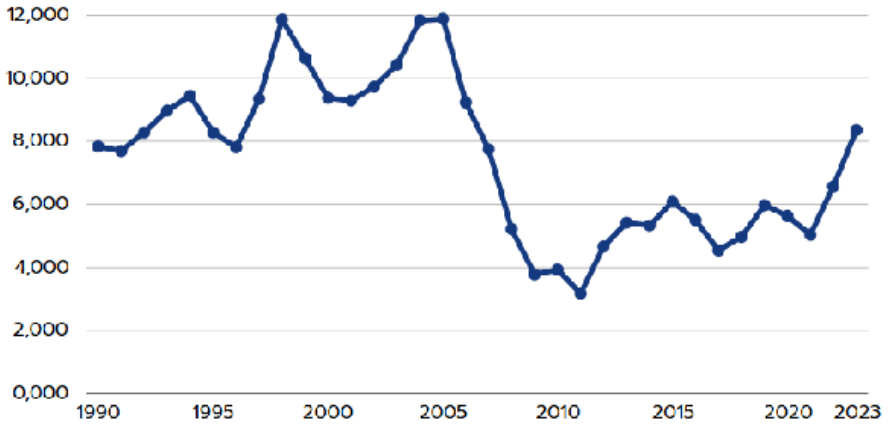
PROTECT SECTION 8-30g AND EXPAND HOUSING CHOICE

There is **still time to submit written testimony** in support of Work Live Ride! WLR passed the House in 2024 with a clear majority.

Many bills have been proposed or raised that would weaken the Affordable Housing Appeals Act (Section 8-30g).

Housing Committee will hold a subject matter **public hearing on 2/13 at the Housing Committee** on two bills from legislative leadership on expanding housing supply – SB 12 & HB 5002.

Annual Building Permits in Connecticut



STABILITY

Expand Just Cause Eviction Protections to ensure all Connecticut renters have quality, safe, stable places to call home.



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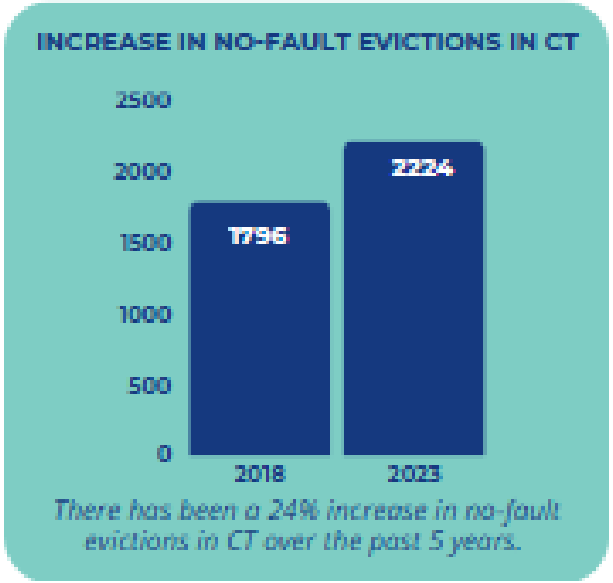
JUST CAUSE EVICTION PROTECTIONS

A public hearing in the Housing Committee is likely to be held on **February 18.**

HB 6889 would expand just cause protections to all tenants in complexes of 5+ units, after the first 12 months of tenancy.

Elderly and disabled tenants already covered by Just Cause maintain their current protections.

Learn more and stay connected to opportunities for action: https://www.cttenantsunion.com/



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

TO IMPACT LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

- Submit written or public testimony at public hearings
- Share the Partnership's action alerts and fact sheets with partners and elected officials

TO ENGAGE OTHERS

- Write an opinion piece to be published in local newspapers
- Attend rallies, participate in phone banks or letter writing campaigns related to affordable housing issues

TO SUPPORT LONG-TERM SYSTEMS REFORM

- Encourage and support philanthropic contributions to support housing advocacy
- Work in coalition and partnership
- Encourage advocates in other sectors to engage in the housing conversation

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TAKE ACTION

Let us know how we can best engage you in being an active advocate for affordable housing this year!

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QUESTIONS?



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JOIN THE CONVERSATION

TAKE ACTION

STAY CONNECTED

- **Upcoming public hearings:**
  - Housing Committee -
    Thursday, 2/13/25 & possibly Tuesday, 2/18/25
  - Appropriations Conservation and Development Subcommittee -
    Wednesday, 2/26/25
- **Save the Date!**
  - **YIMBYTown 2025** National Pro-Housing Conference
    September 14-16th
  - **2025 CAHC** Connecticut's Affordable Housing Conference
    November 17-18th

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THANK YOU

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