



# A Look at the Legislature for 2019

By Bill Chapman

## The Capitol

On January 9, Ned Lamont was sworn in as the new governor of the State of Connecticut. He is joined by CBA member and former secretary of the state, Susan Bysiewicz, as lieutenant governor. Denise Merrill has been re-elected secretary of the state as was Kevin Lembo as the state comptroller. CBA members, former Rep. William Tong and Shawn Wooden, were respectively elected attorney general and state treasurer. All were elected to four-year terms.

## Legislature

With Sen. Martin Looney still serving as pro tempore, he now works with a reformed Senate. During the last two-year session, Sen. Looney led a stalemated 18-18 political contingent in the Senate. He is now to lead, with Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, a Democrat-controlled circle of 23 Democrat and 13 Republican senators. One-third of the Senate is new, including nine Democrats and three Republicans. There are also two members, Sens. Matt Lesser (D) and Rob Sampson (R), who have risen from the House. Their Republican caucus leaders continue to be Sen. Len Fasano of North Haven as Senate minority leader, with his deputy Sen. Kevin Witkos of Avon. Only six senators are attorneys.

## Issues

Revenue enhancer discussions will include statewide tolls, sports betting, and legalizing marijuana. Governor Lamont is now only open to tractor-trailer tolls, though that issue has been filed in federal court. Sports betting is now allowed in eight states and

it's difficult not to include Connecticut. And with Massachusetts offering recreational marijuana, and New York's Governor Cuomo stating he'll have it legal in New York in spring 2019, it will likely be a done deal in Connecticut too. There's also chatter being presented to the leadership from the Tax Foundation, a Washington, DC think tank, about taxing accounting and legal services to consumers. Only three states tax their legal services—Hawaii, South Dakota, and New Mexico—through its gross receipts. Florida and Massachusetts tried it 20 years ago and, because the collection of the tax would not work out and there was a tremendous impact on small business, the legislation was repealed.

With a larger group of proclaimed progressive legislators now in office, there are also legislators working for an eventual increase in the minimum wage to \$15 by 2023. Family and medical leave and the elimination of statute of limitations on sexual assault charges are also on a priority list. Other issues include transportation infrastructure, immigration, criminal justice reforms, regionalization, gun control, state employee pensions and contracts, and elections laws, including early voting. ■



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