

Preview of the 2020 Legislative Session

By BILL CHAPMAN

The Connecticut General Assembly's legislative session will commence on Wednesday, February 5 and end on Wednesday, May 6. The even-numbered years are known for a shortened legislative session, since the session is followed by the November general election for all 187 House and Senate seats and the two-year budget had been approved during the previous session.

This year there are three seats open to January special elections as two members were elected in Fairfield and Greenwich to be their town's chief administrative officer and also through the passing of a long-time legislator from Colchester. By the end of April it will be known which legislators have decided not to return to the Capitol. Already we know a few senators and House members who are retiring and will be joining the Speaker of the House, Joe Aresimowicz, for his last term.

The legislature joined in a December special session to remedy the hospital tax situation, and at the same time settled the restaurant tip-credit bill vetoed by Governor Ned Lamont in July. Meanwhile, the governor has switched up his legislative staff for the upcoming session and is prepared to address financing a ten-year \$19.4 billion transportation infrastructure program. This session will request funding through truck tolls at 15 locations in the state. The democrats, who have the majority of the votes in



both chambers, may support this idea, whereas the republicans recommend funds be taken from the present operating surplus or the "rainy day fund" to support transportation initiatives.

At the time of press, a special session was scheduled to be held at the end of January to discuss transportation funding, specifically about tolls on trucks. Other issues that rise high on the short session agenda could be: prescription drug proposals, vaccines, juvenile justice system reforms, cash bail alternatives, climate change initiatives, sports betting, and cannabis.

Last session's priority wins for the CBA were legislation that directs a real estate closing be conducted by an attorney, thus eliminating the unauthorized practice of law issue; also, after a number of years, the Uniform Trust Code was adopted, establishing numerous rules on creating,

terminating, and enforcing trusts; and finally, as important as passing legislation is, the taxing of legal services did not move forward through the budget and was successfully opposed.

In a short session, we do not have as much glitter and tinsel, but we will be addressing, through our proposals, the infinite succession of estate and probate fee liens, zoning variances, human trafficking, revocation of dissolution of marriage, the right to counsel in eviction cases, and the Uniform Mediation Act, along with a number of bills that our sections will support or oppose. In 2019, we monitored 850 bills affecting our sections and committees. We expect this session to be just as interesting, exciting, and challenging as last session. ■

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