





A look at the **2024** Legislative Session

By MELISSA BIGGS

Connecticut's 2024 Regular Session is set to convene February 7th and it will conclude on May 8th. The session is called the "short session," two months shorter than last year's session. Originally, the short sessions were intended to address the two-year budget and make any changes needed; however, short sessions have become just as busy.

One of the biggest differences between short session and long session is how bills are proposed. During short session, individual legislators may only propose bills that have an impact on the budget, this significantly reduces the bills we will see introduced. Committees are still able to propose bills on subjects in their purview. The session schedule and committee deadlines were approved during the passage of the rules last session—while Joint Favorable Deadlines will be moved up significantly, the 5-day notice requirement for public hearings will remain in effect.

Last session was the first time the General Assembly introduced hybrid public hearings, which provided individuals with the opportunity to testify either in person or virtually. While there were a few hiccups as the process got started, it was clearly very beneficial for both members of the public as well as legislator and we anticipate the hybrid approach will continue.

We anticipate during this session the General Assembly will seek to tackle a variety of topics outside of amendments to the state budget. In addition to funding, we believe the legislature will focus on education, housing, transportation, healthcare, and energy policies. Earlier this month, State Comptroller Scanlon predicted the state General Fund will end Fiscal Year 2024 with a \$178.0 million surplus and the Special Transportation with a \$210.3 million surplus. While this is a vast improvement to where the state has been with continual fiscal deficits, many non-profits and service providers are struggling financially and looking for the state for additional supports.

This year marks the "COVID relief fiscal cliff," the deadline of federal COVID-19 relief funding; the state and many municipalities have used this money to develop successful programs in the community. Connecticut has already heard from many school districts, non-profits, and more of the devastation that will bring to their ability to operate effectively. This General Assembly will need to develop a plan how to support these programs within the state budget constraints.

Legislative leaders, such as Senate President Martin Looney and Education Committee House chair, Representative Jeff Currey, have publicly said that early childhood education is a priority this session. Connecticut has debated housing policies for many years with a focus on how to create affordable housing and reduce homelessness in the state. We believe housing policies will take a front seat this session. We will continue to see conversations about how the state can best improve transportation and what investments will best support the daily life of residents and tourists.

Sections of the Connecticut Bar Association have been working diligently throughout the summer and fall months to prepare for session by crafting draft legislation and gaining support from relevant state agencies and legislators. We anticipate the Bar Association will be very active at the legislature this session both on proposals we have introduced as well as reacting to proposed legislation.

In the coming weeks, we will begin to see legislative leaders announce their legislative priorities and rules for the upcoming session. As we move towards the close of session, we will also learn of legislators' plans for the 2024 election cycle. We anticipate a number of retirements will be announced, as well as individuals announcing their candidacy for a variety of offices across the state. ■

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