

A Look Back on the 2024 Legislative Session

By MELISSA BIGGS

The state of Connecticut's 2024 Regular Legislative Session concluded on Wednesday, May 8, at midnight. Since then, the General Assembly has been back for a two-day Special Session, with the Senate Chamber convening on Wednesday, June 26, and the House Chamber convening on Thursday, June 27, to address a car assessment fix that failed to pass on the last day of session along with several smaller issues.

The state legislature passed Senate Bill 501 during the Special Session, which contains numerous legislative provisions to alter parts of a state statute that will go into effect in October. That statute put in place a fixed depreciation schedule for assessing car taxes that began with 80 percent of the Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP), which would be assessed at 70 percent. The tax would now be assessed at a depreciating rate, beginning with 85% of the MSRP and decreasing by 5% each year. Effectively, cars would be taxed at a little over 50% of their value to begin

with. The bill passed the Senate with a 20 – 9 vote and in the House with an 82 – 42 vote. The bill has been signed into law by Governor Ned Lamont.

The Bar Association was very active during the legislative session, with several members coming up to Hartford to testify in-person, and others taking advantage of the virtual option to testify before a committee during the Public Hearing process. The Association was instrumental in a campaign to pass a proposal allowing for association health insurance plans, HB 5247. That proposal would allow associations like the Bar to aggregate their members and provide health insurance options to members at a lower cost or higher quality than is currently available to solo practitioners, small firms, and mid-size firms. During consideration of the bill, then CBA President-Elect Tim Shearin came to the Legislative Office Building to testify in front of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. In his testimony, President Shearin stated "Our members care about their employees, but they are struggling



Legislative Session



President Tim Shearin testified before the CT Insurance and Real Estate Committee to advocate for association insurance plans; if passed, the legislation would allow associations to make health insurance available to their members comparable to the plans available to large employers.

to provide [their employees] with affordable, acceptable insurance.” Many of our members who are solo practitioners or part of a small or mid-size practice “do not have the leverage to negotiate effectively with the insurance companies on either price or plan designs. With the Bar Association negotiating on behalf of all its other members, it will be able to garner the best insurance options at more affordable rates for its member firms.” The Association also reached out to our House of Delegates, Section and Committee Chairs, and some members asking them to contact their legislators in support of the bill; the outreach created a positive buzz in the building and helped engage legislators who had not previously been engaged on the issue. Ultimately, the bill did not get out of committee due to unrelated political events, but it is likely this issue will come up again in Connecticut’s 2025 Regular Legislative Session, which will commence on January 8, 2025.

Both the Veterans and Military Affairs and the Estates and Probate Sections had great wins this year. The Estates and Probate Section was able to get a bill on decanting of trusts passed, working with the Judiciary Committee, the Attorney General’s office, DSS, and Probate Courts to pass the Uniform Law on Decanting, Senate Bill 272. The Veterans and Military Affairs Section provided support for House Bill 5491, which will provide a full property tax credit for a veteran that has a permanent and total disability rating.

There were several bill proposals that the Bar Association was involved with that did not pass this Session, however, these topics are likely to be raised again in the 2025 Regular Legislative Session. The Planning and Zoning Section became involved in a conversation on how to best to provide required municipal legal notices and if there is an opportunity to better utilize technology for these notices rather than a reliance on printing in local newspapers.

The Real Estate Section was involved in a conversation regarding whether a license should be required for title examiners. The bill proposal ended relatively early in the leg-

islative session, but the proposal spurred comments from a variety of stakeholders. It is likely this concept will come back next year.

Currently, Connecticut’s General Assembly is comprised of a Democratic Majority in both the House and Senate with a membership of 98-53 in the House and 24-12 in the Senate and a Democratic Governor. This year is an election year, meaning the entire House and Senate members are up for election. There have been eleven retirements announced, in addition to many close races across the state to watch. We anticipate that following the November election, each caucus will start to announce their leadership priorities for the 2025 Regular Legislative Session, along with their caucus Committee Leadership assignments. While session won’t formally start until January, legislators will utilize the summer and fall months to identify their priorities for session; this year any legislator can propose a bill on any topic. It is anticipated there will be a large number of legislative proposals this year.

In the next few months, it is encouraged that sections go through their approved legislative positions and determine if any changes or renewals are needed. The Bar Association will be providing a meeting with sections on how best to prepare for the legislative session and any proposals they want to see raised. ■

MEET OUR LOBBYIST

Melissa Biggs serves as the Connecticut Bar Association’s lobbyist. She is a partner at DePino, Nuñez, & Biggs, LLC (DNB), a trusted Connecticut bipartisan government relations firm.

Attorney Biggs began her career with DNB in 2007 and over the years she has developed a natural ability to communicate and advocate for clients in the fields of legislative, administrative, and regulatory affairs. She is a graduate of Southern Connecticut State University with a BS in Liberal Arts and earned her Juris Doctorate degree from Western New England School of Law.

Since joining DNB, Attorney Biggs has been successful at numerous grassroots campaigns; has organized town hall meetings bringing the media, elected officials, and constituents together to discuss problems facing the community; and has led several letter-writing campaigns across the state on a large spectrum of issues. Attorney Biggs is also a member of the Energy, Public Utilities, and Communications Law Section and the Elder Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association.

