



2021 Legislative Victories and More Work to do

This year, CCAG members and allies fought tirelessly for a number of progressive bills that address climate, healthcare, democracy, consumer protection and racial justice in Connecticut. Below is a summary of highlights so far for the 2021 legislative session.

VOTING RIGHTS- VICTORIES AND MORE WORK TO DO:

SB 1202 AAC Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items to Implement in the State Budget for the Biennium. Crucial pieces of voting reforms from the original bill SB 5, along with many other positive policies, were passed in the “implementer bill.” Victories included Automatic Voter Registration expansion, allowing people on parole to vote, easing the delivery of absentee ballots, making drop boxes permanent, and implementing an election monitor for Bridgeport elections. These are just a few of the reforms that will expand voting rights in Connecticut and make our elections accessible and fair for all of our residents.

HJ 58 Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting. This resolution passed by a bipartisan majority in both chambers, but not by the 75% required to put a constitutional question on the ballot. It now must pass again in the next legislature by a simple majority. If it passes by a simple majority again in 2023, the question of removing the constitutional prohibition on no excuse absentee balloting will be placed on the 2024 ballot for voters.

HJ 59 Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting. A constitutional referendum to remove the constitutional prohibition against in person early voting will be put to voters in 2022. There was bipartisan support for this resolution, which only needed a simple majority to pass, having already passed the legislature by simple majority in 2019.

HEALTH CARE:

VICTORY! SB1 AA Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic. This law officially declares racism as a public health crisis, standardizes the collection of race, ethnicity, and language data, and strengthens our community benefit regulations for hospitals.

While COVID has forced a greater focus on health disparities, there are still many structural issues that need to be addressed. This initiative looks at the structural issues behind the numbers and acknowledges the role of racism and white supremacy that perpetuates the long-standing inequities in our state.

Partial VICTORY. HB 6687 AAC Medical Assistance for Children and Adults Without Health Coverage. This will expand HUSKY health insurance to cover undocumented children ages 0-8, and provide postnatal care coverage for undocumented pregnant women, beginning in 2023. While we had started this fight to expand HUSKY healthcare for all undocumented persons, as well as other reforms including a Public Option, this bill provides critical coverage to children and mothers, and a pathway forward to continued expansion of healthcare for ALL of our community members.

CONSUMER:

VICTORY! 6526 AAC Electric Suppliers. Despite previous efforts to rein in abusive practices, third party suppliers continue to develop new schemes to rip off consumers. Consumers using third party suppliers were charged over \$34 Million more than customers on the standard offer in 2020, according to the Office of Consumer Council. Furthermore, there are more than 25,000 households still on auto-renew that were grandfathered in. Deregulation in Connecticut has been almost as much a failure as in Texas. This bill included ending any existing auto renewals.

CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT:

VICTORY! SB 356 AAE an Energy Efficiency Retrofit Grant Program for Affordable Housing. This is an ambitious plan to reduce our energy burden and rapidly decarbonize homes in Connecticut by deploying energy efficiency upgrades, solar panels and zero-emission heat pumps, and by doing it in an equitable way through focusing on low to moderate income residents. This initiative was spearheaded by the CT Renew coalition.

VICTORY! SB 999- AAC a Just Transition to Climate-Protective Energy Production and Community Investment. This law will ensure a just and equitable transition to a green economy. It will help create good jobs for those who need them most, will protect the overburdened and underserved from polluting industries, improve existing affordable housing units, and it will advance racial justice.

MAJOR WIN! The Connecticut General Assembly passed a bill implementing the state budget, which includes a provision requiring the Connecticut Department of Insurance to address the climate-related risks of insurers. *This provision is the nation's first law requiring insurers to address climate risk.*

“This is an important provision that will protect shareholders, policyholders, and the general public. While Connecticut has taken action to fight climate change, the insurance industry has been slow to move. It continues to play a critical role in fueling the climate crisis by underwriting and investing assets in fossil fuel companies. It’s important that Connecticut, the insurance capital of the world, take the lead on a serious approach to dealing with this threat.” Tom Swan, Executive Director at the Connecticut Citizen Action Group

VICTORY! SB 837 PFAS Chemicals in firefighting foam and food packaging. PFAS chemicals, otherwise known as “forever chemicals”, are linked to a number of severe diseases and never break down in the environment, creating long-lasting harm to people and the planet. This bill restricts PFAS chemicals in food packaging and in firefighting foam, and requires the state to implement a take-back program of old foam, and to utilize a fluorine free foam in the future unless required by federal law.

Partial VICTORY SB 1037 An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management AKA “The Bottle Bill”. CCAG was a major proponent of the original bottle bill in the 1970’s. You may have been a part of that. Now we need to bring this policy into the 21st century. This bill will increase the scope of what types of beverage containers can be recycled, and increases the redemption rate from 5 cents to 10 cents. It will also increase the handling fee that the bottling companies pay to recycling centers, which will support and expand access to recycling.

However, industry was successful in inserting damaging changes, and we need to keep the fight going. CCAG is keeping a very close eye on this one. See the statement [here](#)

These are just a few highlights. For more information on these or other issues, please visit our website, [join our email list](#) to be kept updated, or contact:

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