2018 Legislative Session Higher Education Bills

- Increasing faculty teaching loads
- Elimination of dependent tuition waiver
- Further cuts to the block grant
- Eliminating bargaining over healthcare/retirement post-2027
- Prohibiting the increase of tuition
- Legislative control over the allocation of any tuition increase

These are but a few of the almost 100 bills that were submitted in the 2017 legislative session. Based on information from our lobbyists, UConn-AAUP expects to see these again in the 2018 session that begins on February 7, 2018. We will monitor and report to you when it is time for you to contact your legislator to address these bills. Talking points will be provided to you.

2018 Legislative Budget Adjustments

In the ongoing battle between Governor Malloy and the Legislature on how to address the now projected $240.2 million budget shortfall, Malloy symbolically vetoed a bi-partisan bill to reverse cuts to the Medicare Savings Program, fully expecting a promised over-ride by the legislature. (The Medicare Savings Program uses Medicaid funds to help poor and disabled patients pay for health care costs that Medicare does not cover.) The lawmakers wrote their plan into the budget adjustment bill on July 8, 2017, while Malloy was attempting to push the effective date to July 1 for savings to the current budget. The lawmakers found another way to pay for the benefit.

We will prepare to comment on further adjustments to the budget, including possible rescissions to the UCONN appropriation, in the upcoming session.

New Economic Commission Focuses on Structural Reforms

From P.J. Cimini, Esq., Capitol Strategies Group, LLC
UConn-AAUP’s Lobbyist
A new state commission (Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth) was charged by the State Legislature with developing and recommending policies to grow the economy and stabilize Connecticut’s fiscal situation. The new commission is charged with recommending a set of specific recommendations for the General Assembly focusing on a number of key structural problems, including: taxes, state employee retiree pension and healthcare benefits, transportation funding, workforce development, population loss, and regionalization of municipal services. The recommendations are due by March 1, 2018 and will be presented as a bill for an up or down vote by the State Legislature.

The commission has held a variety of meetings at various locations across the state to get public input. Chairman Patricelli said the commission was unlikely to recommend reopening the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition agreement covering retiree pension and healthcare benefits. Leaders of SEBAC will be given an opportunity to address the commission in the days and weeks ahead.

The Commission features eight business leaders among its 11 members. At their first meeting, commission members heard from Governor Dannel Malloy, state budget director Ben Barnes, and Department of Transportation commissioner James Redeker. "This commission will serve to give the private sector a greater voice in strengthening our state's fiscal foundation," Governor Malloy said in a statement. "In particular, it is my hope that they specifically focus on efforts to fund our transportation system in a way that best makes the needed infrastructure investments."

**How You Can Get Involved in the Legislative Process this Semester**

Given the challenges mentioned in this newsletter, we hope you will consider lending your voice in the legislative process this semester. We often get the question, “How Can I Help?” and we would like to provide some ways you can convey the message that UConn and UConn faculty are essential to the current and future well-being of the State and its residents.

- The legislature needs some education about the nature of faculty work. Thus, it is vital that the public at-large and members of the state legislature are made aware of the important work UConn faculty do every day. As a result, we are soliciting faculty profiles through a questionnaire that asks what you do, what is your research focus, what would you change about your work environment, and what inspires you to come to work every day.

  Our goal is to release faculty stories via social media and news outlets throughout the next legislative session in Feb. 2018 and through the 2018 elections. For the link to the profile questionnaire, email Chris Henderson at chenderson@uconnaaup.org

- Become a legislative liaison. A few years ago we solicited some faculty to begin establishing a relationship with their respective legislator – we would like to expand that to everyone in the Chapter. By establishing a relationship with your legislator, talking to
them on occasion about your work and the effects of their legislation, we can hope to change the narrative about academic life. Let us know and we can set up an initial meeting with your legislator in your district or at the Capitol.

- Testify at a public hearing. When there is a public hearing on the previously mentioned bills, we would alert you to that hearing and encourage you to testify. Hearing from UConn-AAUP will not be enough, they need to hear from you – the individuals most affected by their legislation.

- Call or email your legislator. Not only in the context of pending bills that could affect you, but call or email them to introduce yourself. The work you do is amazing and they need to know who is doing it. It could also lead into other opportunities in service and research.

- Attend an event or action. We are planning a series of events at the Capitol this semester including lobby days, press conferences, and gubernatorial candidate forums. Show support for UConn and your work to crystallize the message that higher education is a public good. See our alert via email about an event on the first day of the legislative session.

- Utilize social media. Post a picture of yourself explaining why investment in UConn is important to you and your community. Use the hashtag #UConnWorksforCT. Be sure to send a copy to Chris Henderson so he can post on the Chapter social media pages.

If you have other ideas or wish to help out in anyway, please reach out to us.

**Important Dates**

2018 UConn-AAUP Excellence Awards – Deadline for Submission – February 16, 2018

UConn-AAUP Executive Committee Election – Voting Begins April 2, 2018

[Click here for the Executive Committee Candidate Slate]

UConn-AAUP Annual Chapter Meeting – April 25, 2018 – 12 noon – Student Union #330