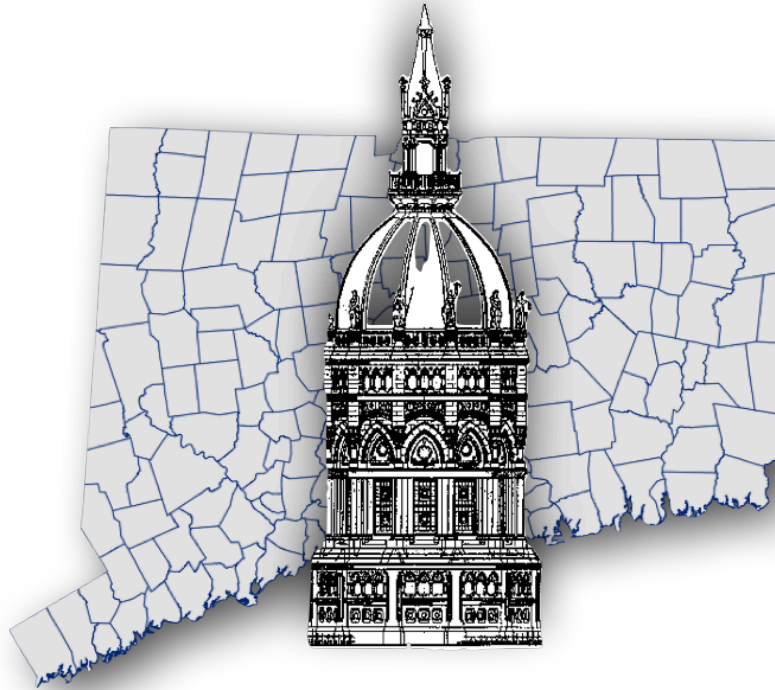


# CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

*A Multi-jurisdictional Agency of Connecticut State Government*



## Annual Report For 2025

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January 8, 2026

## **Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations Membership**

### **Officers**

John Filchak Chair*	Public Member, appointed by Senate President Pro Tempore
Stephen Stephanou, Vice Chair	Town Manager, Manchester

### **Members**

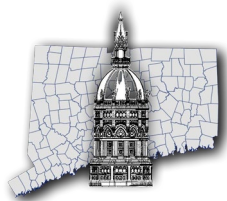
Kevin Coughlin	Designee of Senate President Pro Tempore
Brendan Sharkey	Designee of Speaker of the House of Representatives
James O'Leary	Designee of Senate Minority Leader
Michael Downes	Designee of House Minority Leader
Martin Heft	Designee of Secretary of Office of Policy & Management
Brie Wolf	Designee of Comm. of Economic and Community Dev.
Keith Norton	Designee of Comm. of Education
Harrison Nantz	Designee of Comm. of Energy and Environ. Protection
Hon. Irene Haines	Town of East Haddam
Brian Foley	Town of Tolland
Laura Hoydick*	Town of Stratford
Bridget Fox	City of Stamford
Thomas Gaudett	City of Bridgeport
Lon Seidman	Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
Jan Perruccio	Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents
Matt Hart	Connecticut Association of Councils of Governments
Zak Leavy	Organized labor, appointed by Governor
Eric Protulis	Public Member, appointed by Governor
Michael Curley	Public Member, appointed by Senate President Pro Tempore
Samuel Gold	Public Member, appointed by Senate Minority Leader
Carl Amento	Public Member, appointed by Speaker of House of Rep.
Francis Pickering	Public Member, appointed by House Minority Leader
Ronald Thomas	Designee of CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM)
Karl Kilduff	Designee of the Council of Small Towns (COST)

### **Staff**

Christine Goupil	Office of Policy and Management
Bruce Wittchen	Office of Policy and Management

#### **\*Notes:**

- Due to municipal elections, Laura Hoydick 's term ended in November, 2025 and is currently vacant.
- Senate President Pro Tempore appointed Michael Curley on November 17, 2025 ending the term and Chairmanship of John Filchak. The Chairmanship position was vacant through the remainder of 2025.



This is the 2025 annual report of the [Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations](#) (ACIR), a 25-member state commission established in 1985. The ACIR's mission is to study systems issues between the state and local governments and recommend solutions to enhance coordination and cooperation between the state and local governments.

The ACIR did not receive a new assignment from 2025's regular legislative session and has proceeded with the [2024-25 Work Program](#) it adopted last year. Subcommittees have met nearly monthly to advance that work program's focus areas and a third group was established this year, prompted by discussions of those groups and of the full ACIR. In January, 2025, the ACIR issued the [Workforce Development, Special Education, & Governance Interim Report](#). The final report, incorporating additional work in 2025, will be completed in early 2026.

A foundational report for this work is the [2020 Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services](#). The ACIR prepared that report on behalf of the task force, which was comprised of chairs and ranking members of the Finance, Revenue & Bonding and Planning & Development Committees, but 2020's COVID-19 closures struck just days after the report was presented to and approved by a joint hearing of the task force. The ACIR's education subcommittee, furthermore, is reevaluating education-related recommendations issued a decade ago by the Municipal Opportunities & Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission.

This report also describes the annual reporting on state mandates long required of the ACIR by [CGS Sec. 2-32c](#) and [CGS Sec. 2-79a](#). The ACIR continues to follow its long-standing procedures, but it is not obvious that these reports have much influence. It is time for a new approach. Legislative and other government information is much more accessible online than when those requirements were adopted in the 1990s and numerous government and non-government entities publish their own assessments of mandates. The ACIR is considering a new approach to develop information that would not only be less duplicative but also be more actionable. The ACIR looks forward to developing this concept with the General Assembly and others.

As a final note, ACIR, like many others is concerned about the increasing incivility encountered at every level of government and elsewhere in society. This topic is especially significant to the ACIR given the commission's long-standing encouragement of collaboration and building from shared interests. Incivility certainly exacerbates the public workforce recruitment, development, and retention challenges the ACIR addresses in its current workplan and the ACIR intends to contribute to solutions with its work in 2026 and beyond.

The ACIR welcomes suggestions and questions regarding the work this report describes or proposes, especially any that can help guide future activities. Please feel free to contact us at [ACIR@ct.gov](mailto:ACIR@ct.gov).

Sincerely:

Matt Hart, Chair designate

Stephen Stephanou, Vice Chair

## *STATUTORY AUTHORITY*

The Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) is a 25-member commission established in 1985 by [Section 2-79a of the Connecticut General Statutes](#) (CGS). The makeup is designed to allow for open discussion across broad jurisdictional lines with a common interest in bettering local government. It was created to study system issues between the state and local governments and to recommend solutions as appropriate.

The role of ACIR is to: (1) serve as a forum for consultation between state and local officials; (2) conduct research on intergovernmental issues; (3) encourage and coordinate studies of intergovernmental issues by universities and others; and (4) initiate policy development and make recommendations to all levels of government.

## 2025 Activities

### *2024-2025 ACIR WORK PROGRAM*

- The ACIR continued the work proposed in its [2024-25 Work Program](#), the origins of which was described in the 2023-24 annual report. As of December, 2025, the ACIR's subcommittees are submitting final recommendations to the full commission and a final report should be complete in early 2026. In January, 2025, the ACIR published the [Workforce Development Special Education & Governance Interim Report](#). That report presented nine broad recommendations reflecting initial discussions of workforce, innovation, and research & innovation opportunities:

#### **1. Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

- a. Enable municipalities to post jobs with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) employment website;
- b. Recruitment of special education teachers must be enhanced through financial incentives, improvements in respect and work conditions, and reducing paperwork to focus more on student interactions - including a study of educators who currently hold special education certifications but do not teach in special education programs;
- c. Identify opportunities to reduce administrative burdens, increase employee autonomy, and provide robust professional development opportunities;
- d. Recruitment and retention of educators and the public sector workforce generally, especially from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, must remain a priority;
- e. Develop and expand apprentice and related training programs for the public sector - including vocational and technical skills for students must be a focus for developing student skills for non-college pathways; and,
- f. Identify and test options for improving the public sector work climate.

#### **2. Innovation**

- a. Identify and pilot regional public employee training opportunities to share teacher training and mentoring resources and training programs for core municipal functions and services;
- b. For Education

- i. Remove impediments that discourage efforts to provide education programming or staffing cooperatively or regionally;
- ii. Empower towns to establish cooperative schools and share those schools to be able to exist as separate LEAs or as part of an existing LEA based on the community's needs. If districts are required to create a separate LEA in all situations, they would also have to create a separate governance system. That would deter many districts from attempting this;
- iii. Waive existing education space standards when renovating facilities for regionalized or cooperative programs;
- iv. Enable existing regional districts to initiate studies for dissolution or reconstitution based on a majority vote of involved towns, rather than the currently required unanimous consent;
- v. Grant statutory authority for the establishment of regional finance boards for communities within regional school districts by region-wide majority vote to oversee regional school budgets, ensuring fair fiscal oversight while reducing redundancy;
- vi. Incentivize districts to build local special education programs to reduce outplacement, and leveraging regional service centers (RESCs) to increase capacity and quality of services across multiple towns; and,
- vii. Increased funding for early intervention programs to reduce the number of children who ultimately require formal special education.

### **3. Research and Outreach**

- a. Restructure and repurpose multiple existing state assets resulting in a dynamic public center focused on research, problem solving and outreach for Connecticut's towns and cities.

Since the time of that interim report, the municipal workforce development subcommittee has met with representatives of Capital Workforce Partners, Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, WorkPlaceCT (SW CT), and the CT Office of Apprenticeship Training to explore options. The group will recommend actions for 2026 and beyond.

The special education, education governance, and education workforce development also has continued meeting and, while the first two of its sub-topics are of long-standing ACIR interest, it also is considering the rapidly increasing workforce development issues in education. It also is wrapping up its recommendations for the expected ACIR report.

The municipal services center and innovation subcommittee, the newest group, has been meeting with people representing such centers from CT, nearby states and elsewhere, including UConn's [School of Public Policy](#), MA's [Division of Local Services](#), UMass Boston's [Collins Center for Public Management](#), NY-based [Rockefeller Institute of Government](#), the [TN ACIR](#), and the WA Dept. of Commerce's [Local Government Division](#). This group will also provide recommendations in the ACIR's upcoming final report.

#### *NEW STATE MANDATES ON MUNICIPALITIES REPORTS: 2025*

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/ACIR/Mandates/Session/ACIR\\_2025\\_Mandates\\_Report.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/ACIR/Mandates/Session/ACIR_2025_Mandates_Report.pdf)

In 2025's regular session, twenty public or special acts passed with one or more sections that the ACIR considers to be a mandate. Two more public acts imposing mandates were passed in an unusually late special session. Eleven acts passed in 2025's regular session

include sections having the impact of a mandate on municipalities but are not specifically targeted at municipalities. Another passed in the special session did the same. Common examples such mandates are requirements that apply to all employers, such as expanded coverage requirements for group health insurance policies and stricter requirements for facilities caring for children. This category of mandates is identified as "Section C" mandates in the ACIR's mandates compendiums.

The ACIR also tracks mandate reductions, which are legislation providing relief from existing mandates. Nine such bills were passed in 2025's regular session. One of the special session bills repealed two sections of the statutes that imposed previously-identified mandates, but comparable mandates were created elsewhere in the same bill, so the repeal of those mandates has not been identified as mandate relief.

Details of the mandates that were created, increased, or reduced are discussed in the reports linked above and those details are more important than the raw numbers of mandates created, increased, reduced, or eliminated. In presenting those annual totals, the ACIR is not suggesting that such numbers are a meaningful measure of the extent to which any particular year's legislative session(s) added to or reduced the burden of state mandates on municipalities.

#### *COMPENDIUM OF STATUTORY & REGULATORY MANDATES: 2025*

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/acir/mandates/compendium/2025\\_acir\\_mandate\\_compendium\\_supplement.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/acir/mandates/compendium/2025_acir_mandate_compendium_supplement.pdf)

In addition to the annual session mandates report described in the previous section of this report, the ACIR is directed by [CGS Sec. 2-79a](#) to publish a compendium identifying every existing legislative and regulatory mandate. That distinguishes it from the annual session report, which only identifies a particular year's public and special acts that created, increased, or reduced a mandate. Note that the compendium includes regulatory mandates while annual session reports do not. Additionally, the timing of compendium submission results in this annual report referencing an early 2025 compendium, submitted prior to passage of the bills addressed in the 2025 session mandate reports.

The first full compendium was published in 1998 and an updated full compendium, identifying all known mandates, is published every fourth year. An annual compendium supplement is due the other three years and identifies changes since the previous year's edition. The most recent full compendium was published in early 2024 and the ACIR published the first of three supplements in 2025. The 2026 supplement is due February, 2026 and the next full compendium is due in 2028.

The ACIR continues to reconsider its long-standing approach for reporting on mandates, which has been to catalog mandates with only very limited estimates of fiscal or other impacts. The amount of effort that would be required to thoroughly analyze all of them would be daunting. The ACIR sees the potential for great value from a more rigorous analysis of even just a few mandates each year. One goal would be to assess how predictions of fiscal impacts made at the time mandates were enacted compare with the impacts actually experienced by municipalities. The CT Conference of Municipalities has taken the first steps for such analyses and the ACIR looks forward to a possible collaborative effort.

As was described in the ACIR's 2023-24 annual report, differences in municipal population, staffing levels, governance, and other factors can have a surprisingly large impact on how some mandates are experienced. The ACIR published some very preliminary work in this area back in 1995:

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/ACIR/Misc\\_Reports/1995/ACIR\\_Cost\\_Estimates\\_for-Selected\\_Mandates\\_1995.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/ACIR/Misc_Reports/1995/ACIR_Cost_Estimates_for-Selected_Mandates_1995.pdf)

Some of the ACIR's thoughts about studying mandates in a more focused manner are reflected in Recommendation 9 of the previously mentioned [2020 Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services](#).

#### *TASK FORCE TO STUDY TITLE 7 OF THE GENERAL STATUTES – SPECIAL ACT 22-4*

[Special Act 22-4](#) created the *Task Force To Study Title 7 Of The General Statutes* and reserved one of the eleven seats on the task force for a member of the ACIR, to be appointed by the Senate Republican Leader. Then-leader Senator Kevin Kelly appointed Commission member Gold to that position in late 2022, but the task force never materialized.