



There Oughtta Be A Law

August 19, 2020

A message from Legislative Program Director Vinny Russo....

As we whiz by mid-summer, the time has come for the beach, vacations and legislative proposals.

The next legislative session begins January 6th, and there is a lot to catchup on since COVID-19 cancelled last session in March. The upcoming session will tackle many issues that were not passed this spring and develop a new biennial budget that will begin on July 1, 2021. Due to the deficits the state is experiencing because of the pandemic, the budget debate will certainly be a challenge.

Every year, the Department assembles legislative proposals to be submitted to the General Assembly to be raised as a bill and hopefully passed into law. Complete proposals must be provided to the Governor's office and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) by October 1 this year. There are several steps involved in the process.

Once I receive a recommendation for legislation, I research the proposal and draft it into legislative language. I do that in conjunction with DCF's subject matter experts in order to refine the bill. When the draft language is in good shape, it is shared with Cindy Butterfield and the fiscal team to determine if there is a cost to the proposal. Any bills that cost money get offered through the budget option process.

The language is then shared with the Legal Department to ensure compliance with existing laws and practice. After those edits are complete, the language is shared with the Executive Team for final approval.

However, the Executive Team doesn't have the final say. It's at that point I share the bill with the Governor's office and OPM. Their approval is required before we can submit the items to the Children's Committee to be raised as bills in January.

It is a long process meant to not just polish up the language, but to prepare us to advocate for the bill and consider potential questions or concerns that may be raised by legislators.

With all of this in mind, if you have a concept to submit for legislation next session, please send it to me at vincent.russo@ct.gov by August 26th. Please feel free to contact me directly at (860) 461-6689.