Introduction

The months of December 2016 and January 2017 can be said to have been politically dynamic months on both the federal and state levels of government. The following report details major actions by Representative William Tong and State Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, as well as actions by Representatives Jim Himes, Senator Blumenthal, and Senator Murphy. Major issues currently in contention on Capital Hill include the repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and controversy President Trump’s cabinet appointments, issues that are detailed in the following report. Jim Himes, Senator Blumenthal, and Senator Murphy have both taken leading roles in protesting the ACA’s repeal. Major issues currently in contention in Hartford include the addressing of lowering the state’s debt, an issue that Bob Duff has vowed to address. It should be noted that actions by State Representative Carlo Leone is not detailed in the report, as no news on him during this month was found.

Bob Duff, State Senate Majority Leader

* January 6, 2016: Bob Duff urged DMV Commissioner Michael Bzdyra to find a new private vendor to perform driver’s license renewal services previously provided by AAA northeast, as Connecticut’s contract with AAA Northeast ended on January 1st.
* December 30, 2016: Bob Duff pledged to fight against a Connecticut Department of Military Affairs decision to cut funding for Connecticut Honor Guard rifle salutes at military funerals.
* Bob Duff announced at the end of December that one of his top priority issues to be addressed during the new state legislative session would be to lower the state’s debt. At the same time, he aims to reform how the state funds education after the state eliminated 20 million dollars in school grants. An additional issue that he intends to speak about at the new legislative session includes occupational licensing. He hopes to make the procedure to become licensed less cumbersome when individuals start a job or open a business.
* December 2, 2016: Bob Duff, Senator Carlo Leone, and Representative William Tong announced that Connecticut’s Department of Energy ad Environmental Protection would award 20,000 dollars to Darien to improve waste reduction efforts. A permanent structure to be used as a swap shop will be constructed at the Darien Recycling Center.

William Tong, State Representative

* January 6: William Tong was reappointed as the House Chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Connecticut General Assembly.
* December 19: William Tong submitted a proposal to the state constitution to allow early voting.

Senator Murphy

* Senator Chris Murphy has taken a leading role in fighting Congress’s attempts at repealing the Affordable Care Act.
* Murphy and Blumenthal will be introducing World Wrestling Entertainment executive Linda McMahon for her senate hearing to become head of the Small Business Administration. Both Blumenthal and Murphy declared they were proud to introduce McMahon at her hearing.

Senator Blumenthal

* January 15: Blumenthal announced that he, along with Jim Himes, Representative Rosa DeLauro, Representative Joe Courtney, Representative Elizabeth Esty, would firmly fight the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. It can be
* January 14: Blumenthal opposed a waiver for Retired General James Mattis to lead the Defense Department. He declares that he has doubts about his ability to disagree with the president when he breaks the law as well as whether he will be the champion of civil rights and private liberties.
* Throughout the months of January and December, Blumenthal continuously announced his opposition to the nomination of Senator Jeff Sessions as Attorney General, citing that he has demonstrated “hostility and antipathy…to bedrock constitutional principles” like voting rights, women’s health care and privacy rights, and anti-discrimination protections.
* January 10: Blumenthal called for a halt to Senate confirmation hearings until all of Trump’s Cabinet picks go through a financial disclosure and background check.
* Throughout the month of January and December, Blumenthal has announced his opposition to Paul Ryan’s attempts at defunding Planned Parenthood and repealing the Affordable Care Act.
* Blumenthal has called for strong action against Russia’s recent cyber attacks.
* December 7: Blumenthal urged passage of a new measure that would provide support and benefits to US veterans.

Representative Jim Himes

* January 13: Jim Himes released a statement protesting the Republican attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act. He declared that it would create chaos and uncertainty in the lives of those who relied on it and would drastically increase the national debt by adding 9 trillion dollars over 10 years.
* December 22, 2016: Jim Himes and nine other members of Congress sent a letter to President-elect Trump asking him to appoint a qualified Assistant to the President for Science and technology.
* December 6, 2016: Jim Himes introduced the Reclamation of War Powers Act, a bill that would explicitly return the power to declare and wage war back to Congress. The bill states that Congress will not fund the introduction of US armed forces into hostilities without a declaration of war, specific statutory authorization, or a national emergency created by an attack or imminent threat of attack on the US. Following a declaration of war or an Authorization for Use of Military Force, the President must issue a report every 90 days detailing the threat faced, objectives and justifications of the conflict and a description of the anticipated scope and duration of action. 180 days after the bill’s enactment, all prior Authorizations for Use of Military force will be repealed.
* December 1: Jim Himes voted in favor for the 21st Century Act, which dedicates over 6 billion dollars for new investments with the National Institutes of Health, gives grants to combat opioid abuse, and makes improvements in the FDA. This bill invests about 1 billion dollars in grants to help states battling the opioid epidemic, 4.8 billion dollars for the National Institutes of Health over the next ten years, 500 million dollars for the FDA over the next 5 years, and 1.8 billion dollars for Vice President Biden’s Cancer Moonshot initiative, which aims to cure cancer. At the same time, it authorizes the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, which gives mental health block grants for states, crisis intervention training for police, development funding for prospective psychologists, and strengthens enforcement of the mental health parity law, which forces insures to cover mental illnesses just like other diseases.