DTC Briefing February - March

 Major issues in discussion on the federal level include controversy over President Trump’s travel ban, which he has attempted to reinstate after it was overturned by a federal judge. A great degree of turmoil currently surrounds the appointment of attorney general Jeff Sessions around his relationships with Russia. Numerous Democratic representatives have requested independent examinations of his history in reaction to this. On the state level, turmoil continues over planning Connecticut’s budget. Duff has attempted to preserve funding for certain programs like transportation, and argued for the reforming of the education funding formula to ensure more even distribution of aid around the state. Senator Leone, Representative Tong, and Senator Duff have also pushed a variety of new bills that deal with a host of diverse and varied issues. Many of Darien’s representatives on the federal level, particularly Representative Himes, have rallied support from followers by hosting town halls and events.

US Representative Jim Himes

* February 10, 2017: Himes applauded the ruling by a three-judge panel from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, who refused to reinstate the Travel Ban.
* March 2, 2017: Himes requested a thorough, independent investigation of Attorney General Sessions and his relations with Russia.
* March 4, 2017: Jim Himes hosted a town hall about the policies of President Trump and what Himes and other Democrats could do to block them. He claimed Americans should demand honesty from representatives and need to be more acceptable of immigrants.

US Senator Chris Murphy

* March 3, 2017: Murphy hosted a discussion, welcoming ideas for how a major investment in the country’s infrastructure would aid the Port of New London. He and US Senator Blumenthal joined the Senate Democrats to unveil a $1 trillion transportation infrastructure investment plan to rebuild roads, rails, bridges, and other important infrastructure projects over the next 10 years, which would include 65 billion dollars to modernize ports, airports and waterways.
* Senator Chris Murphy called for Attorney General Jeff Sessions’s resignation based on disclosures that he had met with the Russian ambassador in Washington on two occasions after telling the Senate Judiciary Committee he had no communications with Russia.
* March 6, 2017: Murphy and several Democratic representatives sent a letter to the acting commissioner and acting chairman of the Food and Drug Administration and Federal Trade Commission requesting federal officials to enforce existing regulations on tobacco labeling, accusing foreign competitors of mislabeling their cigars as Connecticut shade tobacco. They say labels contain the word Connecticut, but contain unclear information about the tobacco’s origin.

US Senator Richard Blumenthal

* February 17, 2017: Blumenthal declared that he would fight to hold Scott Pruitt, the new head of the EPA, accountable to the agency’s mission. He further declared that he was completely unqualified for the position.
* February 28, 2017: Blumenthal announced that he was joining with US Senators Bernie Sanders, Cory Booker, and Bob Casey in introducing a bill to allow Americans to purchase safe, low-cost medicine from Canada.
* March 1, 2017: Blumenthal and several other Democratic senators sent a letter that urges Majority Leader McConnell to protect the health of women and families by not bringing legislation that would overturn a federal rule prohibiting discrimination against Title X providers. Title X provides comprehensive family planning and preventive health services.
* March 5, 2017: Senator Blumenthal vowed to block the nominee for deputy attorney general unless a special prosecutor to investigate Russia’s reported involvement with the presidential election.
* March 6, 2017: Blumenthal and Senator Murphy announced their opposition to the new Muslim ban imposed by President Trump, which is now a 90-day ban that is limited to Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Sudan, and Yemen. Himes announced similar opposition.

Senator Carlo Leone

* February 16, 2017: Carlo Leone and a US Air Force Veteran proposed a bill that would discount hunting, trapping, and fishing fees for veterans. The bill would provide an undetermined discount for the various license fees, which range from 19 dollars to 65 dollars. Senator Leone as a way to help veterans recover from PTSD introduced the bill.
* March 3, 2017: Carlo Leone declared that the US News ranks Connecticut among the best states to live in.

Representative William Tong

* February 7, 2017: Tong published an editorial in *The Courant*, a Hartford newspaper that declared the Trump immigration ban a “war on people.” In the editorial, he evoked his own personal history to show the importance of immigrants and foreigners to the US.
* March 2, 2017: Tong and his colleagues stood in support of bill HB6200, a bill that would protect police officers and empower them to ensure that people carrying their firearms can lawfully possess them.

Senator Bob Duff

* Senator Duff applauded the news that Norwalk was selected to receive a 2 million dollar state grant to clean up the 2.2 acre Ryan Park in South Norwalk. It had been closed due to industrial contamination. The grant is part of 6.9 million dollars of funding awarded to a series of towns to remediate and revitalize such contaminated sites across the state.
* February 21, 2017: Senator Duff denounced the decision by the State Senate’s Republicans to block a bill that would raise the minimum wage.
* February 22, 2017: Senator Duff announced his support for Senate Bill 9, “An Act Entering Connecticut into the National Popular Vote Compact,” which would enter Connecticut into a variety of states that hope to make the popular vote decide elections.
* February 27, 2017: Senator Duff submitted a testimony to the Transportation Committee in support of an amendment to the State Constitution establishing a lockbox for transportation funds. It will be used to ensure that funds intended for transportation remain reserved for that use only.
* March 1, 2017: Senator Duff wrote an op-ed to support investing in current schools before building new schools. He also testified in support of Senate Bill 2, which aimed to reform the state’s education funding formula.
* March 2, 2017: Senator Duff joined Senate and House Democratic leaders at the Connecticut Sate Capital to call for senior tax relief by exempting Social Security income from the state income tax.