DTC Political Briefing May – June

The following document is the political briefing for the Democratic Town Committee for the month of May and early June. Representative William Tong has taken a leading role in strengthening laws against hate crimes. Carlo Leone has voted for a law that improves Connecticut’s ability to respond to droughts, a bill that is intended to help the Connecticut state government avoid future revenue volatility, and a bill intended to protect the elderly from predatory loan practices by banks. On the federal level, Chris Murphy, Jim Himes, and Richard Blumenthal have all pushed back against President Trump’s actions like leaving the Paris Agreement. Blumenthal and Murphy have both voted for bills that would improve the nation’s infrastructure and improve healthcare access for veterans.

William Tong, CT State Rep

* May 9. 2017: William Tong led the House in unanimously approving legislation that makes the commission of a hate crime a felony and increases potential penalties upon a conviction. The legislation also makes violence and threats based on gender prosecutable as a hate crime and makes threats a more serious felony charge.
* May 23, 2017: William Tong praised the CT house of Representatives for approving a resolution that seeks an amendment to the Connecticut Constitution allowing early voting in general elections. He claims that early voting would eliminate long lines of people waiting to vote, and would allow more people in Connecticut to cast a vote.
* June 3, 2017: William Tong, co-chairman of the Judiciary Committee, led the house in approving legislation that reforms the state’s bail system. It would limit the number of defendants who are jailed awaiting trial due to their inability to afford a relatively modest bail or the services of a bail agent.

Carlo Leone, CT State Senator

* May 11, 2017: Carlo Leone voiced his support for a Senate Democratic Budget Predictability Plan that would help Connecticut avoid future revenue volatility while reducing the chance of unpredictable budget deficits and paying some underfunded liabilities. The plan caps the amount of revenue the state can collect every year from its volatile estimates and finals portion of the state income tax. It also does not assume any more revenue will be collected from Connecticut’s wealthiest residents.
* May 19, 2017: Carlo Leone introduced a bill that would force the Water Planning Council to standardize drought advisories, watches, warnings and emergencies, and recommend various water use restrictions during droughts. The bill was introduced in reaction to the great drought in Stamford during the summer of 2016. It is intended to help ensure the public has adequate information to deal with drought conditions in the future.
* May 23, 2017: Carlo Leone, who is the Senate Co-Chairman of the Transportation Committee, led a unanimous Senate passage of a bill that creates a pilot program in four Connecticut cities to test self-driving cars. The bill will now enter the House of Representatives for consideration.
* June 2, 2017: Carlo Leone voted for Senate Bill 579, an act that establishes a counseling requirement that must be met before any Connecticut bank or credit union can accept a reverse annuity mortgage loan application. It would protect elderly homeowners in dire financial circumstances from possible deception or bad decisions by requiring banks to counsel them on the pros and cons of reverse mortgages before signing any such agreement.

Chris Murphy

* May 19, 2017: Murphy and US Senator Elizabeth Warren raised concerns about the Department of Labor’s decision to delay implementation of two safety regulations that would protect workers from lethal and cancerous materials.
* May 28, 2017: Chris murphy introduced a resolution with Senator Rand Paul and US Senator Al Franken to stop a portion of the Saudi arms sale that would be used to continue the war in Yemen.
* May 31, 2017: Chris Murphy called for the passage of the Honor Our Commitment Act of 2017, which would ensure discharged veterans with mental illnesses continue to receive the care they need from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
* May 31, 2017: Chris Murphy protested President Trump’s new budget plan to reduce aid to the Long Island Sound Program, a federal program that funds the implementation of a conservation program for the Sound. Other functions of the Long Island Sound Program include improving water quality, reducing harmful nitrogen levels, restoring coastal habitats, and spreading public awareness.
* June 1, 2017: Chris Murphy protested Trump’s decision to leave the Paris Argument, claiming that this action “risks dooming the future of our planet and our civilization.”
* June 6, 2017: Chris Murphy protested the American Health Care Act for giving the wealthiest 1% of the American population a 37,000 dollar tax cut and the wealthiest 0.01 percent of American families a $200,000 tax cut.

Richard Blumenthal

* May 15, 2017: Blumenthal and several other representatives and senators introduced the “Accurate Workplace Injury and Illness Records Restoration Act,” an act which would reinstate record-keeping requirements that protect workers from being hurt on the job.
* May 17, 2017: Blumenthal and Virginia Senator Mark R. Warner introduced legislation to establish a new infrastructure financing authority to help states and localities better leverage private funds to build and maintain the nation’s outdated infrastructure. The *Building and Renewing Infrastructure for Development and Growth in Employment (BRIDGE) Act* aims to address the nation’s investment shortfall in maintaining and improving the US transportation network, water and wastewater systems and energy infrastructure.
* May 18, 2017: Blumenthal, Chris Murphy, Himes, and Elizabeth Etsy announced 1.5 million dollars in federal grants for NeighborWorks affordable housing developments in Connecticut.
* May 25, 2017: Blumenthal joined a bipartisan coalition of senators in an effort to modernize the foster care placement process. States currently use antiquated paper-based systems to process placement cases, which can reduce the efficiency with which foster children are placed in homes. The *Modernizing the Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act* is intended to modernize the system by implementing a standardized electronic interstate system, known as the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise.
* May 26, 2017: Blumenthal wrote to Metro-North President Joseph Giulietti demanding action to address the risk of train derailments resulting from rising temperatures. Warm weather can cause a rail “heat kink,” a warp in railroad tracks that could cause a train derailment.
* June 1, 2017: Blumenthal protested the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement, claiming that it has rolled back progress that has been made in combatting climate change.

Jim Himes, US Representative

* May 10, 2017: Himes protested Trump’s decision to fire FBI Director Comey in the middle of an investigation into possible links and connections between Trump, his campaign and associates with Russia.
* May 18, 2017: Himes applauded the appointment of former FBI Director Robert Mueller as a special counsel to oversee the Justice Department’s Russia investigation. He claimed that he has a reputation as a man of the “highest integrity, honesty, and fairness and the widespread respect of the entire FBI.”
* June 1, 2017: Himes protested Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, claiming that the decision will wreak havoc on the planet.
* June 7, 2017: Jim Himes released part of his statement on the prepared statement from former FBI Director James Comey as part of his testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee. He said that former FBI Director Comey’s statement for the hearing paints a detailed and disturbing picture of a President obsessed with loyalty, secrecy, and exerting inappropriate pressure to achieve his goals.