

With Left Wing in Charge, State Lawmakers Rush Out Some Poor Legislation

Author : David Gurliacci

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Where is the common ground and common sense?

From the hundreds of conversations I've had, 80 to 85% of us fit a "moderate middle" description: center right on state fiscal issues and center left on social issues. So why is it that the very far left in our state carries such weight in setting public policy?

Where is the balance, respect for process and common sense? Where is the sense of responsibility to work together to craft good policy to benefit all in our state?

An example of this lack of sound policy practice is the recently passed Police Accountability Bill (HB 6004). This bill was inspired — with good reason — from the outcry around the country for racial justice sparked by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis by a police officer.

However, this legislation was rushed through a special session without the proper process, public input and precious little time for appropriate due diligence.

Understanding the Real Issues

There were 46 sections to this legislation and most sections had broad bipartisan support. In fact, many of these provisions are already in practice by the majority of police departments in our state. Proudly, Connecticut has some of the highest police recruiting, training and accountability standards in the country.

The most controversial section of the bill was Section 41, eliminating qualified immunity.

Kim Huffard, chairman of the Darien Police Commission, wrote in this response to that section:

“There is no doubt that we need to hold bad officers accountable; current federal law allows us to do that. However, we also need to protect our good officers. This bill removes the safeguards to have unmerited, frivolous lawsuits dismissed early and moves us further from the goal of safety and protection. It also damages recruitment efforts and puts unworkable burdens on our officers that directly impact public safety.”

Notably, we are the only state in the country to pass this law.

What about practical public policy based in community collaboration?

This qualified immunity provision — undermining the work of our police officers and hence our public safety — takes effect on July 1, 2021. If a law can wait another year, why didn't we take the time to vet this, with a proper public hearing and input with stakeholders? This provision should have gone to the Police Accountability Task Force that started their work this summer to report to the Legislature for action in the next session.

This provision also caused abusive/unnecessary divisiveness. Some of my Democratic colleagues were harassed within their caucus and subjected to taunts of racism over their legitimate concerns about this bill.

Charges of "racism" have become a bullying tool of the far left of the Democratic party. Pretty quickly, this shuts down dialogue and nuanced discussion. What if we truly worked together for well-reasoned solutions to the important issue of racial justice?

This was a rush to make a political statement rather than a measured, rational approach based on the facts. Is our job to push a political agenda or to develop policy that moves the ball forward for all in our state?

Our State Needs the Right Kind of Change

Runaway control of public policy — that leads with-top down approach rather than bottom up — with little regard to the voices of all people must be stopped. Your life is affected every day by the laws passed at the state level. Our responsibility is to represent your voice in Hartford. I will continue to advocate for you, for common sense and for working together.

Please let me know your thoughts. You can reach me at terrie.wood@cga.ct.gov or my office at (860) 240-8737.

State Rep. Terrie Wood, a Republican, represents the 141st state House District. She is running for re-election this November. There is no Democratic candidate for the seat.