



A Voice For Faculty

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# Capitol Monitor

A Report on Activity at the State Capitol

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## Opening Day for 2017 Legislative Session:

The opening of the 2017 General Assembly got off to a roaring start with leadership and committee chair changes and House Republican legislators seeking a roll call vote to amend the floor rules that would require floor votes on state employee collective bargaining agreements and arbitration awards. While the motion failed along party lines, make no mistake, this is not the last we will see of attempts at union-busting or anti-state-worker strategies this session.

The evenly split Senate is operating under a new power sharing agreement that means the Senate Republican Caucus will gain a chairperson on each policy committee (in addition to chairpersons from the Senate Democratic Caucus and the House Majority Caucus) and will have more influence on which bills come for a chamber vote. Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman, a Democrat, will cast tie-breaking floor votes.

Senator Martin Looney was re-elected Senate President Pro Tem and Senator Bob Duff was re-elected Majority Leader. Senator Len Fasano was elected Republican Senate President Pro Tem and Senator Kevin Witkos was named Deputy Republican Senate President Pro Tem. In the house, Representative Joe Aresimowicz, an AFSCME member and staffer, was elected Speaker of the House and Representative Matt Ritter was elected Majority Leader. Both votes were by acclamation.\*

For the next five months, legislators will offer new bills that they think will help improve our state. But the elephant in the room is consistently Connecticut's growing budget deficit. Austerity measures have done little to stop the deficit, which is made worse by the unfunded liability that has been building over decades. This deficit cannot be made on the backs of the middle class or state workers. State workers have already made concessions that have saved the state \$1 billion a year. What remains is an unfair tax system that puts the greatest burden on those who can afford it the least—the working and middle class—many of whom are our own students. And with continued decreased funding for higher education, the burden of paying for college is also disproportionately high for those who can least afford it.

\*Source: ALF-CIO *The Worker Bee*

## Right to Work Legislation in CT:

While most professionals in higher education consider Connecticut NOT to be like Wisconsin, it seems some in the legislature aspire to such a categorization. In particular, Republican Rep. [Robert Sampson](#) of Wolcott. His [House Bill 5148](#) prohibits unions from having members pay dues to represent them, which is the definition of “right to work.” Hello, Wisconsin. Obviously, this is nothing but a means to silence all workers in their quest for fair and equitable pay, benefits and conditions. The bill has been referred to the Labor and Public Employees Committee for consideration. This is even more reason to stand up and fight this session to protect quality public higher education in our state. Because the truth is Connecticut is NOT Wisconsin. [Click here to find your legislators](#) and how to contact them to let them know where you stand.

## Higher Ed and Labor Committee Chair Changes:

Changes in legislative committee assignments were abundant on the opening day of the 2017 Legislative session. For CSU-AAUP members, the most important of these are the Higher Education and Employee Advancement and the Labor and Public Employees committees. Both saw changes in leadership.

The Higher Education and Employee Advancement Committee will see Beth Bye of West Hartford as Senate Democratic Chair and Greg Haddad of Storrs as House Chair. Art Linares of Westbrook is the Republican Senate Chair.

The Labor and Public Employees Committee will see Robyn Porter of New Haven as the House Chair, Ed Gomes as the Democratic Senate Chair and Craig Miner as the Senate Republican Chair.

## Join the Day of Action for Higher Ed on Jan. 26:

The three public higher education unions in Connecticut are joining forces Jan. 26 at the Capitol to defend public higher education. We will call on lawmakers to reinvest in the young people of Connecticut who are our state's future. Join us for all or part of the day and hear from expert panelists, students, lobby your legislators, and see a special screening of [Starving the Beast](#), a new documentary by Steve Mims on the chronic defunding and corporatization of public higher education in our country. **Free buses will take you and your students to Hartford throughout the day.** [Click here for the day's agenda.](#)

Email [Liz Newberg](#) to register.

## The Major Issues of 2017:

Every year, legislative leaders ask the Office of Legislative Research (OLR) to identify and provide brief descriptions of important issues that the General Assembly may face in the upcoming session. This report represents the professional, nonpartisan views of staff in OLR, the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), and the Legislative Commissioners' Office (LCO) on possible upcoming legislative issues. \*

To read the report, [click here.](#)

\*Source OLR Major Issues Report

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