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## Connecticut moves its jobs agenda forward with the 2010 Jobs Bill

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Maintaining a competitive edge in these difficult fiscal times can be a daunting challenge. That is what makes Connecticut's recent bipartisan efforts to strengthen its job creation programs and create new ones so important. These programs will support innovation, capital investment and business growth at a time when they are most needed.

Taken together, these bold new measures and reforms send a strong message to companies that the state is now an even more attractive place to do business.

The centerpiece of these legislative changes was the 2010 Jobs Bill, which included a broad array of pro-business measures, including:

- \* Creation of a \$15 million small business loan program where small businesses and nonprofits can receive up to \$500,000 in loans and lines of credit.
- \* Authorization of \$5 million in pre-seed financing for businesses developing innovative concepts.
- \* Creation of an angel investor tax credit program that will provide 25% personal income tax credits for up to \$100,000 in angel investments in bioscience, photonics, information technology and green technology businesses.
- \* Expansion of the state's job creation tax credit program to include small businesses and companies that hire workers with disabilities.
- \* Creation of a new sales tax exemption for machinery, supplies and fuel used in renewable energy and clean energy technology industries.
- \* New loan reimbursement and training grants for education and careers in green technology, life sciences and health information technology.

Our economy is poised to grow and this legislation delivers the tools and diverse solutions necessary to get us started.

A top priority for businesses in the 2010 session that concluded in May was reforming the permitting process. Businesses were waiting too long and dealing with too much red tape in the process. The phrase "time is money" certainly rang true.

New legislation successfully addressed this important issue. It shortens the timeframes businesses face when trying to secure environmental permits from the state. It also includes a series of business-friendly reforms to the permitting process that will expedite job creation - without undermining environmental protections.

The bill also creates the Office of Permit Ombudsman within the Department of Economic and Community Development to work with companies seeking permits from the state departments of Environmental Protection, Public Health, and Transportation. The goal is clear: to make it easier for companies to do business in Connecticut.

Connecticut also wanted to capitalize on one of its most important transportation and economic

development assets. New legislation creates an economic development zone in four towns near Bradley International Airport. The law establishes tax incentives for manufacturers and certain related businesses that build or substantially renovate facilities in the area and create new jobs.

Eligible businesses can receive a 5-year, 80% property tax exemption for new, renovated or expanded facilities and on machinery or equipment installed as part of a development or acquisition, and a 10-year corporation business tax credit on the amount of the tax attributable to the facility. The business tax credit can range from 25% to 50%, depending on how many employees at the facility are residents of the town or zone who qualify for federal job training assistance.

From investing in innovation and entrepreneurship to streamlining our permitting process, these new laws are part of a thoughtful, comprehensive approach to improving our business climate and supporting job growth and business expansion.

Now we are in the process of getting the word out about these changes and all that Connecticut has to offer potential investors. For example, I just recently hosted a two-day event to market Connecticut to national site selectors and real estate professionals who influence major corporate decision-making with respect to new projects and relocations. It was a productive visit, one that I believe opened a lot of eyes to the development potential of our state as well as to the many competitive advantages we offer.

Some of which include:

- \* A central location - we are a gateway to northeastern United States and eastern Canada;
- \* One of the best-educated and productive workforces in the world;
- \* Unsurpassed quality of life;
- \* Home to some of the country's premier educational institutions; and
- \* A transportation network of highway, rail, airport and port facilities.

Connecticut is home to some of the leading companies in the world. In fact in the last few months alone, some of these companies have made large commitments to Connecticut. The state will reap the benefits of more than \$200 million in investments by Electric Boat, Frito-Lay, Nestlé Waters, Derecktor Shipyards and Starwood Hotels & Resorts. These projects will help to grow and expand the state's economy by ensuring nearly 3,000 top quality jobs for the state and spurring innovation.

We have strong industries, including aerospace and defense, bioscience, alternative energy, insurance and financial services, photonics/optics, digital media and precision machining industries. And fostering innovation is certainly key to the state's long term economic prosperity.

Connecticut Innovations, the state's venture capital quasi-public agency has partnered with our colleges and universities to develop a very robust incubator network. Partnering with the universities of Connecticut, Bridgeport, Hartford and Yale, the state has 7 locations around the state where entrepreneurial students can test their innovative ideas and work alongside faculty and state mentors to commercialize those ideas.

This all goes to show that even in the worst of times, there is much the state can and should be doing. Connecticut's economic development efforts never rest.