



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: REP BILL STRAUS
617-722-2040
508-992-1260

Legislative Proposals by Rep. Straus Advance at the State House

A number of legislative initiatives proposed by Rep. Bill Straus (D-Mattapoisett) have advanced to become law or have moved further through the Legislature's Committee process in recent weeks. The Massachusetts House and Senate are working toward completion of this session's work. "As the Legislature completed action on the new State Budget this week, I am hopeful that we can now tackle a number of additional legislative proposals which are advancing at the State House", said Bill Straus.

Some of Representative Straus' bills and the recent action taken, are summarized below:

Seniors

H. 1512 was filed this session by Bill Straus to classify certain kinds of life insurance policies which are marketed to seniors as consumer protection violations. Often promoted in television advertising, these policies suggest that very low dollar premiums will provide substantial life insurance benefits to seniors. The actual contract language for such policies often leads to limited or no benefits until after a minimum waiting period of several years. Oftentimes, the seniors would be better off saving the money as opposed to purchasing a life insurance policy which pays little or no benefits after death.

Rep. Straus' proposal to restrict this kind of rip-off of our seniors had a public hearing at the State House on March 14th this year and was voted favorably by the Joint Committee on Financial Services on May 22nd. The bill recently received preliminary approval by the full House of Representatives on June 28th and is pending House Counsel's review before the House takes it up again.

Open Space and Recreation

H. 1283 was filed by Bill Straus to authorize the state's Environmental Trust Fund to provide grants for land acquisition and construction of paths and local bikeways as part

of the Trust's coastal preservation mission. The Trust Fund receives financial settlements from environmental lawsuits and a portion of the proceeds from the sale of environmental license plates which have become very popular in Massachusetts. Bill Straus strongly believes that an important part of environmental preservation includes land acquisition as well as increased opportunities for public access to appreciate these treasures.

This measure was passed by the full House of Representatives on February 9, by the State Senate on May 18th and then signed into law by Governor Romney on June 7, 2006 as chapter 99 of the Acts of 2006.

Kayak Safety

H. 1414 was filed by Bill Straus in response to a tragic death which occurred to a Mattapoisett resident while taking a kayak training course in the waters off Fairhaven. This loss might have been avoided if the commercial instructors had first provided instruction in how to exit a submerged kayak **before** taking students out into the waters.

The bill, later combined with additional safety equipment proposals by another legislator from Cape Cod, was given full House approval on May 10th and is now pending in the State Senate.

Local Initiatives

Bill has also been at work on bills which are initiated by local town meetings requiring legislative approval. Most recently, H. 4201 was passed by the Legislature and received approval to become law by Governor Romney. This bill, amended by Representative Straus on the floor of the House, implements town meeting requests to extend betterment payments for new sewer extensions in the Town of Marion, and most importantly, will permit the Town to charge as interest on these projects a rate 'equal to that chargeable to the town'. In other words, the town will not have to charge extra interest on the betterment bills then might have occurred under existing state law. This last provision was adopted by the House of Representatives on a floor motion by Bill Straus less than 48 hours after this year's town meeting vote in Marion.