

2021

# SENATOR CHRIS MURPHY A YEAR IN REVIEW



# LISTENING TO AND WORKING HARD FOR CONNECTICUT

2021 proved to be another challenging year with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to impact families across the country. Throughout the year, Senator Chris Murphy worked tirelessly to address the issues that matter most to Connecticut families, while understanding there are still so many challenges left to tackle. The following report outlines the efforts Chris led in the U.S. Senate and the work he did for Connecticut residents this past year.

## 2021 BY THE NUMBERS



Traveled across the state, hosting 52 town halls, roundtables, and listening sessions with Connecticut residents;



Introduced or cosponsored over 300 pieces of legislation, including bills and resolutions;



Completed his 5th Walk Across Connecticut: four days, 55 miles, and 12 towns, talking to hundreds of people along the way;



Responded and reached out to Connecticut residents through over 515,000 calls, emails, and letters;



Returned \$3,928,101.49 to constituents, including owed Social Security payments, veterans' benefits, tax refunds, and other savings from federal agencies;



Helped over 4,716 Connecticut residents work through federal issues and get their owed benefits - including COVID-19 relief support through stimulus checks and PPP loans;



Sent 18 COVID-19 resource newsletters with an average reach of 407,000 people.

# DELIVERING FOR CONNECTICUT: THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

Chris knows that the lifeblood of Connecticut's economy is its transportation system, which is why he did everything he could to secure wins for our state in the historic bipartisan infrastructure bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This sweeping legislation, signed into law by President Biden in November, will create new jobs, finally fix our nation's crumbling infrastructure, cut commute times, fight climate change, and deliver serious cost savings to Americans. For decades, Republicans and Democrats in Congress have talked about working together to pass a game-changing investment in roads, rail lines, and broadband. This year, we finally did it.

## A SNAPSHOT OF HOW THIS WILL IMPACT CT

\$30 billion for the **Northeast Rail Corridor**

\$106 million to protect the **Long Island Sound**

\$489 million for the **Coast Guard**

Millions for **natural disaster resiliency**

\$53 million for **electric vehicle charging**

\$3.5 billion to help **rebuild our highways**

\$561 million for **bridge replacement & repairs**

\$1.3 billion to improve **public transportation**

At least \$100 million for **broadband coverage**

Passage of the **BuyAmerican.gov Act**



# DELIVERING FOR CONNECTICUT: COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Chris has worked hard to make sure the people of Connecticut get the support and resources they need to stay safe and pay their bills.

As Congress worked on the American Rescue Plan to address the devastating impacts of the pandemic, Chris ensured that the needs of Connecticut constituencies were met.

## HERE ARE A FEW OF THE MANY WAYS THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN HAS HELPED CT:

- ✓ Helped lift over 37,000 children in Connecticut out of poverty through the expanded Child Tax Credit, where most Connecticut families received up to \$3,600 per child
- ✓ \$4.3 billion in aid to towns and cities;
- ✓ \$1 billion to support reopening schools safely;
- ✓ \$11 million for summer enrichment opportunities in Connecticut;
- ✓ \$197 million for COVID-19 testing, tracing and vaccine preparedness in Connecticut;
- ✓ \$813 billion for small businesses through the Paycheck Protection Program;
- ✓ \$28.6 billion for a Restaurant Revitalization Fund;
- ✓ \$277 million for child care providers;
- ✓ 15% increase to SNAP benefits

## STANDING UP FOR CONNECTICUT VALUES

As states like Texas and Mississippi pass radical abortion bans that threaten the reproductive freedom of millions of Americans, Chris has moved to protect abortion access. He is a co-sponsor of the Women's Health Protection Act, which would guarantee equal access to abortion, free from restrictions and bans that interfere with a patient's ability to make personal health decisions without political interference.

Chris knows that America is stronger because of our immigrant communities. Chris supports immigration reform that creates a pathway to citizenship, permanently protects dreamers, and invests in smart border security.

Over the last year, Republican legislatures across the country have crafted new ways to deny Americans access to the ballot box. Chris is a cosponsor of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would restore the Voting Rights Act and help end voter suppression.



## REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Chris is a leading voice in Congress in the fight to reduce gun violence and keep families safe, working across the aisle this year to find a compromise solution that would expand background checks and save lives. Following the tragic mass shooting in Oxford, Michigan that left four students dead, Chris renewed his push, calling for a vote on this lifesaving and popular legislation on the Senate floor. While Republicans blocked his efforts right after the Oxford shooting, Chris is still at the table ready to negotiate with Republicans on a solution to save lives.

Chris is also working on a number of bills to address gun violence, including:

- **The Safe Gun Storage Act**, legislation that would direct the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to establish safety standards for firearm locks and firearm safes;
- **The Untraceable Firearms Act**, a bill that would ban ghost guns by requiring online and other sellers of gun-making kits to comply with federal firearm safety regulations;
- **The Equal Access to Justice for Victims of Gun Violence Act**, legislation to ensure that the gun industry, including manufacturers, sellers, and interest groups, can be held liable when it acts with negligence or disregard for public safety.

**CT INSIDER**

‘Do not lecture us’ about life, Murphy says in fiery speech following school shooting

## SUPPORTING CONNECTICUT JOBS

In the Senate, Chris has been focused on growing jobs in Connecticut and boosting our economy.

### CHAMPIONING CONNECTICUT MANUFACTURING

The manufacturing industry in Connecticut – from large defense and aerospace manufacturers to the thousands of smaller factories and machine shops that supply and subcontract to them – is vital to our state’s economy. Chris knows that supporting these industries will bring even more good-paying jobs with strong benefits to Connecticut.



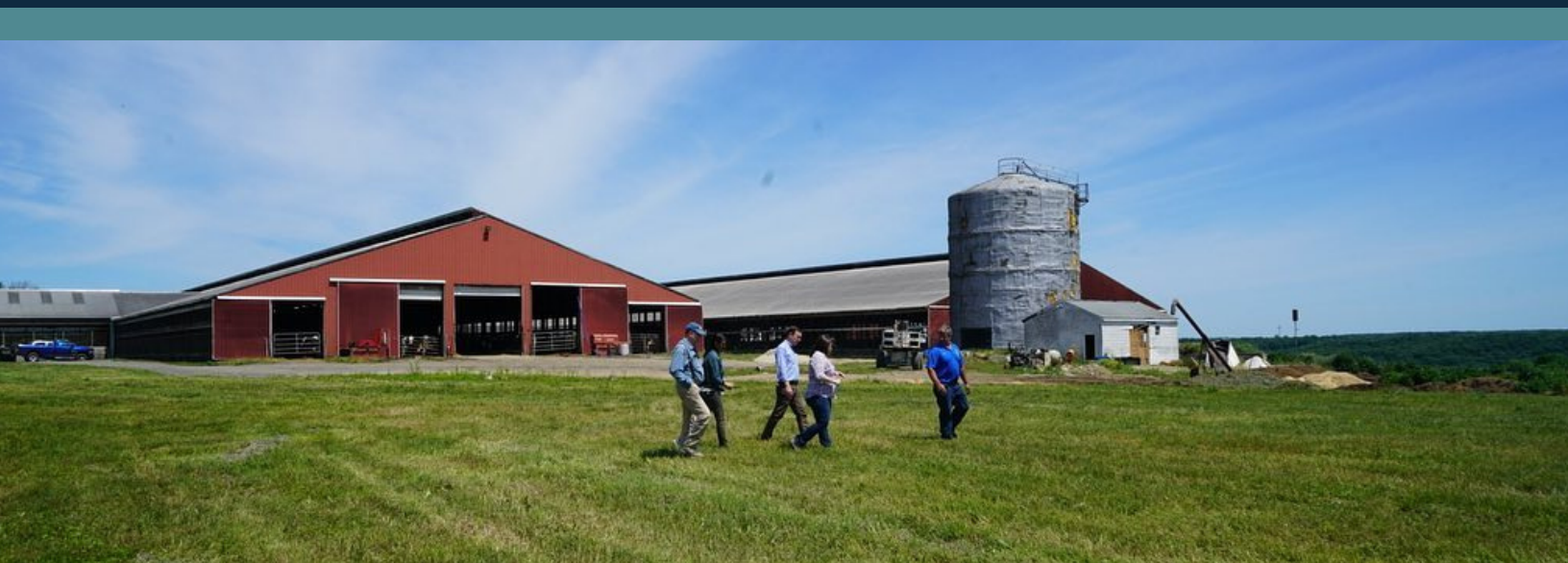
Since coming to Congress, Chris has been critical of the loopholes in our current Buy American laws that allow federal agencies to skirt the law and give federal contracts to foreign companies instead of U.S. manufacturers. Chris introduced and passed the BuyAmerican.gov Act with Senators Rob Portman (R-Ohio), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) to help American manufacturers win federal contracts.

The legislation was signed into law as a part of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and will establish a centralized online hub to ensure federal agencies prioritize the purchase of American-made goods in compliance with existing law.

Chris called on the Biden administration to fully utilize the Defense Production Act to scale up domestic production of medical supplies that aid our response to the pandemic, including the manufacturing of COVID-19 testing kits and vaccines. He successfully pushed for an additional \$10 billion in funding for the program that was included in the American Rescue Plan.

## **SUPPORTING CONNECTICUT FARMERS**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on farmers, Chris urged the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide additional relief to dairy farmers, the lifeblood of Connecticut's farming community. In August, the USDA announced a \$350 million pandemic assistance program to provide dairy farmers with access to important relief. Chris also joined a bicameral group of lawmakers to urge Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to invest in business technical assistance for small and mid-sized farms and food businesses.





## PROTECTING OUR NATIONAL SECURITY

As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia and Counterterrorism, Chris has been a leading voice in the U.S. Senate for progressive foreign policy. He believes that a strong American military is vital to guard against conventional security threats, but many of the emerging threats to global stability cannot be checked by military power alone.



Chris has long been supportive of President Biden's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan. After the withdrawal, Chris urged the foreign policy establishment to look beyond shortsighted critiques and examine the past 20 years of failed policy decisions in Afghanistan in powerful op-eds for Crooked Media and USA Today. Chris's office has worked to help resettle Afghan refugees and reunite Connecticut residents with loved ones leaving Afghanistan, and was proud of a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provision that honored our commitments to those Afghan partners who, at great personal risk, supported the U.S. mission in

Afghanistan. Chris was also proud of a separate NDAA provision that created an independent Afghanistan War Commission.

A longtime advocate for ending forever wars, Chris introduced the National Security Powers Act, a sweeping, bipartisan proposal that gets Congress back at the decision making table when it comes to the use of military force, emergency powers, and arms sales.

This year, Chris continued his long-running work to end the humanitarian disaster in Yemen—proposing a new path forward for U.S. policy in the Middle East under President Biden and working with the administration to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen.

Chris helped author the International Pandemic Preparedness and COVID-19 Response Act of 2021, comprehensive legislation that takes critical steps to end the global COVID-19 crisis while strengthening the U.S. government's pandemic preparedness. He worked to help Americans living abroad get access to COVID-19 vaccines and supported the Biden administration's efforts to donate vaccines to countries around the world. Chris also worked to secure \$150 million to counter propaganda from our adversaries as we work to combat misinformation, especially in the fight against COVID-19. He also pushed hard to secure U.S. assistance dollars to Ukraine as a way to counter Russian aggression as part of this year's NDAA among other important national security priorities.

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**WAR ON | THE | ROCKS**

**NATIONAL SECURITY IS STRONGER WHEN CONGRESS IS INVOLVED. HERE'S HOW WE GET BACK TO THE TABLE.**

# IMPROVING HEALTH CARE:

As a member of the U.S. Senate HELP Committee, Chris has fought to protect people with pre-existing health conditions and strengthen protections in the Affordable Care Act.



Chris has continued his work to champion mental health reform, especially in light of the devastating impact of COVID-19 on mental health. Chris held regular roundtable discussions throughout the state with patients, families, health care providers, and advocacy groups about the effectiveness of federal mental health and substance use disorder programs. Chris is also soliciting feedback from Connecticut residents on his website as he works with Republican Senator Bill Cassidy (R-L.A.) to update and reauthorize the landmark Mental Health Reform Act.

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan Chris helped pass, Connecticut received more than \$13.8 million to fund mental health and \$14.7 million to fund substance use block grant programs, as well as \$442,000 to expand access to pediatric mental health care through telehealth.

# IMPROVING EDUCATION AND FIGHTING FOR FAMILIES

As a member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, Chris is working to make sure every child, no matter their race, zip code, or learning ability, has access to a quality education.

As a parent of school-aged kids, Chris knows firsthand how challenging the last school year was for our children. He worked hard to ensure that the American Rescue Plan included dedicated funding for summer enrichment programs, which helped Connecticut students of all socioeconomic backgrounds gain the chance to reset after a tough year. In total, the American Rescue Plan brought Connecticut \$11 million to increase access to high-quality summer programming, which helped 235 summer programs across the state expand opportunities for nearly 100,000 kids and provided free admission to over 90 state museums for kids and their parents.

Data has consistently shown that the benefits of early learning extend far beyond individual students and the walls of a school; new federal investments in affordable child care and universal preschool will extend the promise of early learning to more Connecticut children and cut costs for families.

Chris also worked to secure \$179 million – an increase of \$70 million over fiscal year 2021 and \$30 million more than the budget request – for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program in the draft appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2022.

# HELPING CONNECTICUT HOMEOWNERS

Crumbling foundations continue to be a nightmare for families throughout central and eastern Connecticut. Thousands of homeowners are trapped in dangerous homes through no fault of their own, and insurers have been slow to step up to the plate. This year, Chris worked with Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) to introduce a comprehensive legislative package to provide meaningful relief for homeowners and businesses in Connecticut with crumbling foundations.



The Crumbling Foundations Small Business and Homeowners Assistance Act would establish a grant program through FEMA to award funding up to \$30 million annually over a five year period. Grants would be available to states to reimburse affected owners of small businesses, condo associations, and homeowners for work to prevent, repair and mitigate damage caused by concrete foundations containing pyrrhotite.



The Tax Assistance for Crumbling Foundations Act would provide significant federal tax assistance to homeowners with crumbling foundations by restoring and extending the federal casualty loss tax deduction for crumbling foundation repair costs.



The Aid to Homeowners with Crumbling Foundations Act would provide \$150 million over five years from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to states like Connecticut that have created non-profit crumbling foundation assistance funds to repair damage to residential structures due to pyrrhotite.

Many Connecticut families rely on public housing for a safe place to call home. However, the backlog of maintenance and repairs have exposed residents to lead, mold, and a lack of heat or running water. Chris sponsored the Public Housing Emergency Response Act to create a one-time, \$70 billion appropriation into the Public Housing Capital Fund to address the estimated \$70 billion backlog of maintenance and repairs in public housing.

Chris also sponsored the Home Lead Safety Tax Credit Act of 2021 to help American families cover the cost of eliminating lead from their homes.



## **LAND CONSERVATION**

Chris continued his efforts to increase funding for land conservation and expand access to open space. He introduced the Highlands Conservation Act, which doubles funding for land conservation projects in the densely populated Highlands region that includes parts of Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

This bill has been approved by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, a key step before this bill can be signed into law. He also worked with his Senate colleagues from New England to reauthorize the two National Heritage Areas (NHAs) in Connecticut, the Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area.

## PRESERVING LONG ISLAND SOUND

Connecticut's economy depends on a healthy Long Island Sound. The Sound generates billions of dollars from tourism, fishing, shipping, and recreation.

This year, Chris secured significant new investments in the Long Island Sound through the bipartisan infrastructure bill. This includes \$106 million in resources to help clean up the Sound and restore wildlife habitats, and \$1 billion for FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program to help communities adapt to climate change. He also used his role as the Chair of Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Committee to provide additional resources for the BRIC program. His bill provides an additional \$1 billion on top of the current balance of \$1.6 billion, a 63% increase in the program.



# FIGHTING FOR COLLEGE ATHLETES

Over the last several years, Chris has been a leader in calling for college athletes to be fairly compensated for their labor, as well as allowing them to collectively bargain to secure better compensation along with the health, safety and academic protections they deserve.

## Hartford Courant

How Sen. Chris Murphy became Washington's leading advocate for college sports reform

He knows that there's something flat-out wrong with an industry that makes billions of dollars a year while many of its athletes can't afford to put food on the table or purchase a plane ticket for their parents to see them play. Chris put these ideas to paper when introducing legislation that would grant athletes unrestricted rights to make money off their talent (the College Athlete Economic Freedom Act), and allow college athletes to collectively bargain for better pay and working conditions (the College Athlete Right to Organize Act).

We hoped COVID-19 would be in the rearview mirror by now, but we're still dealing in many ways with the fallout of the pandemic. Chris worked hard this year to make the people of Connecticut's lives better. Lots of work remains, and he'll keep pushing ahead.





Find out more about Senator Murphy's work  
and get in contact with our office at:

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