

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

CONGRESSMAN JOE COURTNEY



FIGHTING ALONGSIDE EASTERN CT DURING COVID-19

A NEW BIPARTISAN COVID-19 RELIEF PACKAGE

On December 21st, Courtney helped pass the bipartisan 2021 Omnibus Appropriations Package (H.R. 133), a bill that combined the annual government funding bill with a new round of COVID-19 aid. President Trump signed the bill into law on December 27th. In addition to funding the U.S. government for FY 2021, H.R. 133 also included important pandemic relief funding, with as much as \$9 billion in aid for the State of Connecticut -

2020 BY THE NUMBERS



Over \$942,000 in savings recovered for CT-02 Constituents



Over 250 eastern CT residents directly assisted with Economic Impact Payments, Unemployment Insurance, and Tax Filings



745 Casework Request Files Processed



Provided nearly 80,000 families with a comprehensive COVID-19 Resources Guide, which is always available at courtney.house.gov/COVID19



6 Town Halls with **over 27,500 Participants**



790 total federal grants awarded totaling to over \$228,631,207 welcomed home to CT-02



Over 80,000 calls and e-mails received

- through various components that will provide a boost to our economy while we still battle COVID-19. The bill passed the House and Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support, and includes important pandemic relief such as:

- **Individual Payments of \$600 per eligible person** and their dependents—Courtney supported higher payments in the House-passed HEROES Act and CASH Act, but those higher payments were blocked in the Senate, leaving \$600 as the final outcome
- **Support for Restaurants and other Small Businesses**, and a new round of forgivable PPP and EIDL loans with expanded opportunities for restaurants, live venues and theatres, and more
- **Rental Assistance** for families struggling to stay in their homes. Connecticut will receive \$237 million for this purpose.
- **A Strengthened Earned Income Tax Credit** to help ensure families facing unemployment or reduced wages receive a strong tax credit based on their 2019 income
- **Extends and Improves the Employee Retention Tax Credit** to help keep workers in jobs
- **Enhances Unemployment Insurance Benefits**, extending the program and adding \$300 per week for unemployed Americans
- **Provides new funding to local school districts and colleges** to keep classrooms open, and safe. In Connecticut, \$492 million will go to K-12 schools, and \$225 million to support public and private college and universities.

COURTNEY WORKED TO AUTHORIZE RELIEF AID THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

The 2021 Omnibus Appropriations package was the 5th comprehensive COVID-19 relief bill that Courtney has helped to become law this year. Throughout 2020, he's voted to pass other relief measures that helped bring home much needed support to eastern Connecticut. Despite all of the polarization in an election year, each one was passed with bipartisan support:

- **H.R. 6074** authorized the first round of funding for research and vaccine development; small business loans; telemedicine services for seniors; and more
- **The Families First Coronavirus Relief Act** provided paid leave for sick Americans; unemployment insurance for laid off workers; expanded food assistance programs; increased Medicaid funding, and more



- **The CARES Act** authorized individual payments to American workers and families; new resources for nurses, doctors and hospitals; forgivable PPP and EIDL loans for small businesses, and more. A provision authored by Rep. Courtney in the CARES Act ensures that Americans with private insurance will not pay a penny to receive the COVID-19 vaccine
- **H.R. 266** re-supplied critical small business programs like PPP and EIDL with a new funding, expanded COVID-19 testing, and authorized additional funding for hospitals and care centers

For the Latest COVID-19 aid resources, **visit courtney.house.gov/COVID19**

WORKING ACROSS THE AISLE FOR EASTERN CONNECTICUT

Being a resource for eastern Connecticut to rely on throughout COVID-19 has been one of our top priorities this year, but it hasn't slowed down our work to advance other important priorities for our region.

My team never stopped working this year, and even during a global pandemic we were able to get some big wins across the finish line on behalf of eastern Connecticut.

A BIPARTISAN WAY TO WIN PLUM ISLAND

The House has passed Joe's bipartisan bill to save Plum Island for 5 years in a row, and this year they forced the issue in the Senate. Rep. Courtney re-introduced his bipartisan bill with Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-NY) and others to officially repeal the law that mandated the sale of Plum Island, and their effort was signed into law as part of this year's bipartisan appropriations package for FY 2021. **This year it became final: Plum Island will be protected once and for all for future generations.**

ENDING SURPRISE HEALTH CARE BILLING

The FY 2021 appropriations package also included bipartisan, bicameral language that will end surprise billing for emergency and scheduled care – so that **no patient will receive an unexpected bill for treatment they received from an out-of-network doctor.** This is a hard-fought win for eastern Connecticut patients.

SUPPORTING THE SURGE IN OUR WORKFORCE

As Chairman of the House Seapower Subcommittee, which oversees Navy shipbuilding, Rep. Courtney has secured important bipartisan support for our region's submarine industrial base and manufacturing sector.

- Rep. Courtney led the **successful bipartisan effort to fully restore construction of the 2nd Virginia-class submarine in 2021**, reversing a Trump Administration plan to break the two-a-year build rate.
 - As Chairman, Courtney has led this effort since February. Finally, in December, Congress voted to override President Trump's veto of the bipartisan NDAA, delivering the win on Rep. Courtney's year-long push to restore the construction of the 2nd Virginia-class submarine in 2021
- After years of shepherding the Columbia-class submarine program towards realization, Courtney announced on November 5th the Navy's contract award to construct the first ever Columbia submarine at Groton's Electric Boat.



Today's announcement makes the hard work, planning and advocacy for this generational program real. This isn't just a milestone for the shipbuilders at EB—the Columbia-class program will also be a major opportunity for industry partners up and down the supply chain for years to come, and a foundational piece for our region's economic future

— JOE COURTNEY 11/05/20

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Joe and his team work hard to help our region's veterans and military families, and Joe works across the aisle to advance their priorities in Congress.

- On December 7th, Rep. Courtney's bipartisan bill to **protect educational Impact Aid funding for schoolchildren from military families** during COVID-19 was signed into law by President Trump. H.R. 8075 is one of **only a handful** of COVID-19 relief bills to be made law this year, Rep. Courtney introduced it on August 25th, and now it's going to provide real support to school districts like Groton, Ledyard, and others across the country.



This is a big deal for us. Groton has about 1000 military-dependent children who live in military housing, and because their parents don't pay property taxes on their military housing, the town misses out on that revenue. The town was in real jeopardy without this funding

— DR. MICHAEL GRANER, SUPERINTENDENT OF GROTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

- In May, Courtney helped secure a new lease for a **larger Veterans Outpatient Clinic in New London**. The new CBOC is staying in New London, and it's going to be over 15,500 sq. ft. – nearly THREE TIMES its old size, with DOUBLE the amount of staff. It's expected to open in summer 2021.
- Joe co-introduced the bipartisan Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, and it was **signed into law in 2019**—finally making way for many vets exposed to Agent Orange to get the care they deserve.

- As of October 31, 2020, the VA has provided over 25,900 Vietnam veterans and their families with **more than \$699 million in health care benefits for service-connected injuries related to AO**. But there's more work to do.
- On December 16, Joe voted to pass H.R. 7105, a veterans' health care bill that would move the ball forward on another effort Courtney has worked to advance through the Agent Orange Fairness Act (H.R. 566) by mandating a GAO report that could lead to many more Vietnam veterans becoming eligible to receive these benefits.

ADDRESSING THE CRUMBLING FOUNDATIONS CRISIS

Congressman Courtney has continued working to ensure eastern Connecticut gets the support it needs to address the crumbling foundations crisis.

- Courtney worked to secure **\$2 million to support continued research into the crumbling foundations crisis and to develop new solutions to respond to it** in the final FY 2021 appropriations package. The University of Connecticut School of Engineering was already awarded the first such grant in 2020, and has already made great progress in developing new technologies for testing and standards for remediation of pyrrhotite
- Earlier this year, Courtney secured clarification from the IRS that financial assistance paid to homeowners through CFSIC will **not be treated as taxable income**—a major update as people begin to prepare their tax filings
- Courtney also worked to successfully include three bipartisan crumbling foundations provisions in the Moving Forward Act, a bill that passed the House and would **expand federal funding to help homeowners** address pyrrhotite damage; **extend the “casualty loss” deduction** for concrete repairs; and authorize **funding to help schools** with crumbling foundations. Courtney will continue working to pass these provisions into law in 2021.

HERE FOR EASTERN CONNECTICUT'S FARMERS

Eastern Connecticut's farmers and agricultural producers were hit hard by COVID-19, and Courtney has worked alongside them this year to help expand federal relief opportunities, and to get resources where they're needed most.

- Courtney led the effort to secure **Coronavirus Food Assistance Program Round 2 (CFAP 2) funding** for eastern Connecticut's shellfish farmers, -



- - who were left out of round one of the successful program
- Throughout the year, Courtney has pressed USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross to **expand assistance to farmers through CFAP and through other sources**, like the federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Courtney is a founder and Co-Chairman of the bipartisan Congressional Dairy Caucus, and he's met frequently with eastern CT dairy farmers to help them apply for assistance through programs like CFAP, PPP and EIDL, and for updates on COVID's impact on their ability to sell and distribute milk and other products
- In November, Courtney was recognized by the **CT Farm Bureau Association (CFBA) with the 2020 Legislative Award**, which honors folks who have given an outstanding commitment to Connecticut farmers and the state's agricultural economy. The CFBA is Connecticut's leading agricultural advocacy organization representing over 3,400 farmers and members of CT's ag sector

LOWERING THE COST OF HIGHER ED

Many people and families in eastern Connecticut are working to pay off student loans. Congressman Courtney is working to support them.

- Over the summer, Courtney introduced a bill that would **let Americans refinance their legacy student loans down to the current low rate of 2.7%**. Today, American scan refinance their debt on mortgages and car and motorcycle loans – this bill would give Americans with student loans the same opportunity.

CASEWORK HIGHLIGHTS

SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of our country, Rep. Courtney's office didn't stop serving the constituents of the Second District, especially those who have served our nation. When a veteran from Canterbury experienced a significant disruption with his VA-based patient care and medication delivery, he contacted Courtney's team to help expedite the receipt of his medication. Rep. Courtney's caseworker spoke with him to gain fulfill understanding of his needs, and learned that the delayed medication was needed for the treatment of PTSD. Courtney's office immediately initiated communication with the VA to ensure the availability of this much-needed medication. After receiving assurance from the VA, the Canterbury veteran was able to retrieve his medication and continue his prescription regiment.

HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES DURING COVID-19

Mrs. B, a small business owner in Killingly, was faced with the tough decision of closing her business due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She was thankfully able to qualify for assistance through the SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, established as part of the CARES Act that Courtney voted to pass in March. After she was approved to receive funding, however, an issue arose with the disbursement of the loan and the funding wasn't properly directed into her account. Mrs. B contacted my office seeking assistance with receiving her EIDL funding, and Courtney's caseworker immediately contacted the SBA—Office of Disaster Assistance to rectify the issue. After corresponding with the SBA-ODA, Courtney's team was able to clarify the -

- issue with Mrs. B's funds and help establish a direct line of communication between her and the agency. As a result, the small business owner received her full EIDL loan and was able to keep her doors open.

FEDERAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE DURING COVID-19

The CARES Act, which Courtney helped pass in March, initiated a moratorium on all evictions for those struggling to make their mortgage or rental payments during the pandemic. While being a lifeline for many American families, it also created concern over how the forbearance on payments would be managed by mortgage lenders across the country. One family from Griswold contacted Courtney's office because they became were apprehensive about whether a large balloon payment would need to be paid once the forbearance period ended. Courtney's office contacted to the family's lender, and helped them get a clearer picture on the company's repayment options. They also connected the family with the lender to establish an open line of communication between the two parties for the future.

Healthcare Assistance During COVID-19



HEALTHCARE ASSISTANCE DURING COVID-19

Over the past year, our country's healthcare sector experienced an unforeseen amount of pressure to care for those affected by COVID-19. Alongside those with COVID, we still had individuals with existing ailments who needed assistance navigating our healthcare system, including those relying on Medicare and Medicaid. A constituent from Westbrook had an ongoing issue involving a billing discrepancy between Medicare and Walgreens Pharmacy. While Medicare was paying for his prescriptions, a billing error resulted in him being assessed a higher co-pay amount. Upon receiving this information and supporting documentation from the constituent, Courtney's caseworker contacted the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to determine and address the source of the error. Once this issue was resolved, Courtney's team took the extra step to help the constituent recover the hundreds of dollars of out-of-pocket expenses he was erroneously billed and paid.

ASSISTANCE WITH SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

In Colchester, Mr. F had difficulty reconciling social security benefits for his wife, who had recently passed. Without securing these benefits, he would have been unable to settle her estate. Mr. F contacted Rep. Courtney's office, and his Social Security caseworker quickly contacted SSA to check the status of the benefits and expedite Mr. F's claim. Soon after, Mr. F received a response from SSA stating that he would receive his wife's benefits retroactive to when she first became eligible for Social Security benefits. This has allowed Mr. F to resolve his beloved wife's estate.

FEDERAL GRANTS BY THE NUMBERS

Rep. Courtney has helped to welcome home more than \$228,631,207 in federal funding and congressionally authorized federal contracts in 2020 alone:

Amtrak and the Connecticut Department of Transportation received a \$62,500,799 grant award from the **Federal Rail Administration** to replace the Connecticut River Bridge, providing connection for Amtrak's Northeast Regional line and ConnDOT's Shoreline East trains between Old Saybrook -

- and Old Lyme. The busiest corridor in the nation, this bridge carries 56 trains every day. Despite the line being intended for high-speed rail, trains crossing the 113-year-old bridge are limited to 45 mph. The construction of a new, modern bridge creates tremendous potential for increasing the flow of rail traffic and goods along the Eastern corridor.

The Norwich Prevention Council received **\$125,000** in continued funding through the **Office of National Drug Control Policy's Drug Free Communities Support Program**. NPC's mission is to prevent risky behavior among Norwich youth by building local capacity to provide programs and opportunities for youth; promoting education and training to reduce tobacco, alcohol, prescription drug misuse, and other risky behaviors.

The cities of **Norwich** and **New London** both received emergency **Community Development Block Grant** funds authorized by the CARES Act. Norwich received a total of **\$1,050,712** and New London received a total of **\$871,756**. These funds can be used to address housing, public facilities, public service, and economic development issues in light of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

EASTCONN and the **Thames Valley Council of Community Action** both received funding for their **Head Start** and **Early Head Start** programs, which provide intensive, comprehensive child development and family support to low-income infants, toddlers, children, and their families, and to pregnant women and their families. EASTCONN received **\$2,690,844** and TVCCA received **\$4,039,523**.

Generations Family Health Centers and **United Community and Family Services** were both granted funds from the Department of Health and Human Services to expand COVID-19 testing. These grants were used to expand the range of testing and testing-related activities to best address the needs of their local communities, including the purchase of personal protective equipment; training, outreach, procurement and administration of tests; laboratory services; and the expansion of walk-up or drive-up testing capabilities. Generations Family Health Centers received **\$409,684** and United Community and Family Services received **\$398,299**.

Courtney announced that the federal **Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)** awarded **two federal grants totaling \$250,000** to help support

addiction prevention and recovery efforts in **Norwich, Andover, Hebron**, and **Marlborough**. Both grant awards were dispersed through **ONDCP's Drug Free Communities** program, and will provide continuing funding to strengthen infrastructure among local partners to create and sustain a reduction in local youth substance abuse.