

**CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COMMISSION ON
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**



***ANNUAL REPORT FOR
2013-2014***

A multi-jurisdictional agency of Connecticut state government

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ADVISORY COMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Officers

W. David LeVasseur, Chairman, Office of Policy & Management

Members

Hon. Steve Cassano, Designee of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Hon. Frank Nicastro, Designee of Speaker of the House of Representatives
James O’Leary, Designee of the Senate Minority Leader
Lisa Roy, Designee of House Minority Leader
Sarah Hemingway, Designee of Commissioner of Education
James Watson, Designee of Commissioner of Economic and Community Development
Robert Kaliszewski, Designee of Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection
Hon. Leo Paul, First Selectman of Litchfield
Joyce Stille, Administrative Officer of Bolton
Scott Shanley, Town Manager of Manchester
Hon. Scott Jackson, Mayor of Hamden
Elaine Whitney, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
Frederick Baruzzi, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents
Linda Krause, Regional Planning Association of Connecticut
Mark Paquette, Public Member appointed by Senate President Pro Tempore
Carl Amento, Public Member, appointed by Speaker of House of Representatives
John T. Finkle, Public Member, appointed by Senate Minority Leader
Michael Stupinski, Public Member, appointed by House Minority Leader
Ronald Thomas, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities
Hon. Barbara Henry, Designee of the Council of Small Towns

Vacancies

Public Member, appointed by Governor
Municipal Official, town of 20,000 to 60,000, nominated by CCM and appointed by Governor
Municipal Official, town of 60,000 or more, nominated by CCM and appointed by Governor

Staff

Bruce Wittchen, Office of Policy & Management

ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

ACIR STATUTORY MANDATE

The Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) is a 24-member agency created by the State of Connecticut in 1985 to study system issues between the state and its local governments, and to recommend solutions as appropriate. The makeup is designed to allow for open discussion across broad jurisdictional lines with a common interest in bettering local government.

As specified in [Section 2-79a of the Connecticut General Statutes](#) (CGS), the role of ACIR is to: (1) serve as a forum for consultation between state and local officials; (2) conduct research on intergovernmental issues; (3) encourage and coordinate studies of intergovernmental issues by universities and others; and (4) initiate policy development and make recommendations to all levels of government.

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

The Commission has had active participants from all of its constituencies throughout its existence. Commission membership is made up of representatives from the state legislative and executive branches as well as representatives of local government, education and the general public who attend the meetings and fully participate in the deliberations and decisions.

The Commission Chairman is W. David LeVasseur, Director of Municipal Finance Services and acting Undersecretary of the Intergovernmental Policy Division (IGP) of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). He is also a former First Selectman of Killingworth and a former Chairman of the Lower Connecticut Valley Selectman's Association and of the former Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials.

Administrative support for the day-to-day operations of the Commission is provided by Bruce Wittchen of OPM's Intergovernmental Policy Division.

COMMISSION MEETINGS

Commission members contributed many hours of volunteer time to the State, both at meetings and through advice and consultation with the staff. At full Commission meetings, staff work is reviewed, issues and potential recommendations are debated, and direction is given on future Commission activities. The Commission, furthermore, can establish subcommittees to address specific issues.

Commission membership is diverse in background and expertise, assuring lively debate with different viewpoints being analyzed and blended. The ACIR is the only ongoing entity where representatives of various levels of government and the public regularly meet together to discuss the governance issues that are so important to each.

COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

NEW STATE MANDATES ON MUNICIPALITIES REPORT - 2013

http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/2013_Mandates_Report.pdf

In accordance with [CGS Section 2-32c](#), staff reviewed every public and special act adopted by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor. Staff compiled a listing of acts that that created a new or reduced an existing mandate. This report was adopted by the Commission in June, 2012 (See Publications section of this report).

Twenty-five public acts enacted in 2013 included mandates as identified by the ACIR. That was three more than in 2012 and five more than in 2010, both of of which were short legislative sessions. The 2013 total, however, was sixteen fewer than in the 2011, the previous long legislative session. There also were three mandates that are not specifically directed at municipalities, which is two more than in 2012 and one less than in 2010, both short legislative sessions. The 2013 total is eleven fewer than in 2011, the previous long legislative session.

In comparing 2013's totals to previous years, it's important to note that the ACIR will no longer attempt to distinguish between "mandates" and "minimal mandates" as had been done through 2012. "Minimal mandates" were considered to be those that, individually, can likely be absorbed without additional appropriation but do have some level of fiscal impact. That classification, however, was considered to potentially be misleading because mandates do not affect all towns equally and it is difficult to predict the potential impact of new mandates. The ACIR decided in 2012 that to identify a new mandate as being minimal can misrepresent the impact on some towns.

A long-standing objective of the Commission is to encourage mandate reductions that can provide administrative and/or fiscal relief for municipalities. During 2013, the state enacted eleven such reductions, which is three fewer than in 2012 and five

fewer than in 2011, but eight more than in 2010. It's worth noting that while there were fewer reductions than in the previous two years, 2011 had the greatest number of reductions since ACIR started collecting that information.

***MUNICIPAL BUDGET
ADOPTION EXPERIENCES IN
CONNECTICUT 2013-14***

http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/2013_Municipal_Budget_Adoption.pdf

The ACIR continues to conduct annual surveys of all 169 Connecticut municipalities and 17 regional school districts to collect data and report on municipal budget adoption process. (See Publications section of this report).

Among the results of the 2013-14 budget year survey are the following: 75 municipalities adopted their budget by means of a referendum, a number similar to recent years. Four municipalities required more than three votes to adopt their 2013-14 budget, like in 2012, and 142 municipalities adopted their budgets on the first vote, a decline of eight from 2012 and ten from 2011. Eight municipalities did not adopt a budget until after the July 1 start of the new fiscal year. That is more than in the previous four years, but less than any other year since 2000.

One regional school district adopted its budget by means of a district meeting, a decrease of one from 2012, which had been only the second time since 2003 that as many as two districts adopted a budget by means of a district meeting rather than by referendum. Like in 2012, fourteen of the seventeen districts adopted their budgets on the first ballot. Unlike in recent years, one of the school districts was unable to adopt its budget prior to the beginning of the fiscal year and, for the first time since 2003, a school district was unable to adopt its budget prior to the beginning of the school year.

This was the twenty-third year that the Commission surveyed local governments. The compilation of such information might prove useful in a more comprehensive examination of the local budget adoption process than was previously possible.

**COMPENDIUM OF
STATUTORY &
REGULATORY
MANDATES REPORT**

http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/2014_Compndium.pdf

CGS Section 2-79a requires the Commission, every fourth year starting in 1998, to submit to the General Assembly a report listing all state mandates on municipalities, categorizing them, providing their enactment dates along with a brief history, and describing the cost incurred by local governments in implementing these mandates. In the interim three years, the Commission must submit a supplement containing statutory mandates changed in the previous legislative session as well as any regulatory changes made during the year. The next full compendium will be published in 2018, with compendium supplements to be published in the interim.

OTHER ACIR ACTIVITIES

An ACIR Subcommittee met in late 2013 to assess the ACIR's role and consider options for improving the ACIR's role in intergovernmental policy. That subcommittee will continue to meet

The ACIR occasionally selects topics for a major research project. In fiscal year 2008 the Commission decided to do a major study concerning the future fiscal challenges facing both the State and the municipalities. The Commission surveyed municipalities and found healthcare costs as the foremost concern of respondents. The Commission intended to hold a symposium in Spring, 2009, but it was deferred due to budgetary considerations and, to date, has not been scheduled. Given the limited availability of staff to support such efforts, the ACIR has not undertaken any further symposia or major research projects.