

# Letter: John Shaban for 135th State Representative

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To the Editor:

Easton needs and deserves a state representative who represents our interests. We had that for decades through 2017. We haven't had it since. Now we have someone who represents the socialist caucus.

John Shaban supports local control of our schools and local zoning laws, which protect our schools and property values. Anne Hughes does not support these. She supports a wealth tax. John doesn't.

John has previously served three terms in the State House. He represents our values. He will be a needed firewall AGAINST Hartford. Please join me in voting for John on Nov. 3.

John Allan

Easton

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# John Shaban Candidate Statement: Focus on Our Families and Our Towns

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On Nov. 3 the residents of Easton, Redding and Weston have a choice for state representative between a long-serving, dedicated and pragmatic public servant on both the Independent and Republican lines, or an activist for national protests and debates on the Democratic line.

I served as your state representative for three terms from 2011 to 2017 and did not run for a fourth term opting instead to run for U.S. Congress. I have remained engaged in our communities, and ask for your vote for my re-election in 2020. As I did during my six years as your state rep, I remain focused on the needs of our small towns — and in particular, on local control of schools and zoning.

By comparison, our current freshman State Rep. Anne Hughes of Easton has spent her first 16 months engaged in national protests and movements. As I did from 2011-2017, I will focus first on our families and our towns. Thank you for your support and consideration!

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# Letter: Shaban Led, Hughes Blamed

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(Response to Shaban's Call for Leadership Is a Little Late, Aug. 19, 2020)

I write to reply to the letter criticizing John Shaban's article questioning the lack of state and local leadership during the recent storm.

Sadly, Hughes tries to excuse her absence before and during the storm by claiming that she will now "call for legislation" after the fact to "hold Eversource executives accountable." Hughes' repeated attempts to blame "big business" and "the rich" for all of our problems isn't leadership, it is deflection and political pandering. Calling Eversource and UI to task before the storm — as Shaban did for six years while in office — is what we needed, not more hind sighted legislation and finger-pointing.

Notably, Shaban helped craft and pass bipartisan legislation in 2011 and 2012 that gave state and local officials the tools to address storms and power outages before and during the crisis. He also pushed for and passed the "Russ Neary Bill" (PA 13-204), named after one of Easton's firefighters tragically killed in the 2011 storm, to help the families of fallen first responders.

We need representatives in Hartford that focus on our towns — and take the lead before a storm and/or an important issue hits — not the pandering and partisan politics

displayed by our current freshman state representative.

Wendy Bowditch

Easton Republican Town Committee Chair

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# Police Reform: Too Rushed or Too Delayed?

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## *Easton Delegations Tackles the Question*

Timing was the crucial question for Easton's two state legislators, as they voted on police reform in the special session of the Connecticut General Assembly that convened last July 24 and adjourned July 29.

The state House and Senate adopted the proposed law enforcement measure and Gov. Ned Lamont signed the bill, officially known as H.B. No. 6004, into law on Friday.

The legislation, among its reforms, provides for an inspector general and municipal civilian review boards to oversee police behavior.

The reform would also make it easier for municipalities to fire and decertify police officers. Disciplinary action by municipalities against police officers would become matters of public record.

On the contested issue of qualified immunity, the legislation would enable individuals to bring civil suits against police officers for alleged denial of rights, subject to a court's determination that the police officer in good faith believed that he or she was acting lawfully.

In a party-line vote Wednesday, state Sen. Tony Hwang, R-28<sup>th</sup>, was essentially asking for more time to design law-enforcement reform, when he joined his fellow Republicans in voting against the police accountability and transparency police measure.

After a 10-and-a-half hour debate, state Rep. Anne Hughes, D-135<sup>th</sup>, urged her House colleagues to support the police reform bill as an emergency response, without delay, to the decades-long trauma of systemic racism and rogue police behavior.

"I agree there is a need to act and many of the elements in the bill are good, strong proposals. But rushing legislation does not do justice to the level of attention this issue requires. The hastily pushed approval may create sweeping unintended consequences," Hwang stated in a press release.

Hughes told her colleagues, "You better believe this registration is rushed because that's what you do in an emergency. You rush to render aid, to intervene. And our colleagues have worked hard for years to prepare for this intervention. I resent the implication that this is sloppy. What's sloppy is waiting so long to intervene."

The differences, then, between Easton's legislators in the matter of law enforcement reform appear to come down to issues of process, not necessarily of policy, although the qualified immunity debate did reveal significant policy differences on the floors of both the House and the Senate.

Section 42 of the police accountability and transparency act does offer the contending parties some potential relief on the immunity issue by providing for a task force to study the implementations of the police transparency and accountability act and to report to the General Assembly no later than Jan. 1, 2021 on “any recommendations related” to the immunity provisions of the reform bill.

This includes the “anticipated impact” that the measure might have “on the ability of a police officer or municipality to obtain liability insurance.”

*Contributor’s Note: This article continues a review of recently adopted law enforcement legislation. A third article will cover three other bills adopted by the state legislature dealing with absentee ballots, telehealthcare, and insulin costs.*

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## Special Session Bills Passed, Easton Delegation Agrees/Disagrees

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The Connecticut General Assembly closed its special session this week having adopted four pieces of legislation, three with bi-partisan support and one with a vote along party lines in favor of the Democratic majority in both the state House of Representatives and

the state Senate.

State Sen. Tony Hwang, R-28<sup>th</sup>, and state Rep. Anne Hughes, D-135th, tracked that overall voting in their respective legislative houses. Hwang represents Easton, Fairfield, Newtown, Westport, and Hughes represents Easton, Redding, Weston.

The bill they disagreed on — Hughes yay, Hwang nay — was the most controversial of the four special-session proposals, and it took marathon, over-night debates in both houses before “An Act Concerning Police Accountability” was adopted.

The lightning rod in that legislative proposal was the section on qualified immunity for police from civil litigation.

The legislation would provide that individuals alleging that their civil rights have been violated by the actions of a police officer have a right to sue the officer with the only immunity for the officer being the court’s determination that the officer had an “objectively good faith belief” that his or her conduct did not violate the law.

There is a provision in the bill that each municipality “shall protect and save harmless” the sued officer from financial losses and expenses resulting from such litigation. However, if the officer is judged to have committed a “malicious, wanton or willful act,” he or she is required to reimburse the municipality for its costs and expenses.

The accountability legislation would also create the new position of inspector general to investigate police use of deadly force. As well, the legislation would allow the formation of civilian review boards with subpoena powers in police matters. Disciplinary actions against police officers would be in the public record, and the bill has provisions making it easier for municipalities to fire and decertify police officers. That could prevent them from being hired by other municipalities.

*Contributor’s Note: This is the first of three stories on the recently concluded legislative*

*session. The three other pieces of legislation will be covered in a subsequent story.*

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## Op-Ed: Legislature Must Give Special Session Measures Due Consideration

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On July 23, the Connecticut House of Representatives was in session to discuss changes to Connecticut's absentee voter laws, police accountability reform, and important healthcare changes as the industries adjust to added challenges treating patients during Covid-19. The Senate is expected to take up those bills today, July 28.

In these unprecedented times, the legislature is using unprecedented methods to affect some major changes to Connecticut law. We cannot let the pandemic or the emotionally charged atmosphere force us to rush through these expansive and consequential bills. These are important matters that require careful consideration, public input and proper process.

On the issue of police accountability reform, I do support taking a closer look at the accountability and transparency of Connecticut's police force. As the ranking senator on the Public Safety Committee I have been very invested and led the recent measures proposed to strengthen police oversight and social justice. I would recommend the legislature fully examine any unintended consequences to law enforcement working to

maintain public safety and to municipal financial and legal liabilities that would occur if law enforcement lost its qualified immunity.

The short two-day notice we received for the virtual “public hearing” has me concerned that the legislative body is taking a rushed approach to handling a very important and emotionally charged issue affecting many people in and out of law enforcement.

I have received an incredible amount of input and suggestions from my constituents and law enforcement on how and if the legislature should enact any police accountability reforms. I appreciate each person taking the time to share their thoughts on the proposed changes to an integral part of our everyday lives.

On the issue of Connecticut absentee voter laws, the rules surrounding a voter’s ability to vote absentee needs our immediate attention. I support expanding the regulations to include people voting absentee so as not to put themselves at risk of contracting Covid-19, or any illness for that matter, due to their compromised immune systems.

We must approve whatever measures necessary to legitimize the changes enacted by the Connecticut Secretary of the State for the 2020 primary and general elections. I would urge my colleagues to not let the perfect be the enemy of the good and make sure we are putting voter’s health and safety first in the immediate future.

Looking ahead, any constitutional change must go through the proper, legal process to make permanent changes to the Connecticut constitution to enable these expanded absentee rules in the long term.

On the issue of health care cost concerns, two items to be addressed in the July Special Sessions are capping the price of insulin and expanding insurance providers’ requirement to provide coverage for services provided via telehealth.

The rest of health care needs to continue functioning even with all the added stress of

the pandemic. This is not the time to play games with profit margins or covered services. I am glad to see that the legislature is taking a closer look at mitigating the additional financial burdens Connecticut residents are taking on to manage their health.

*Hwang represents the 28th Senate District in the Connecticut General Assembly. Hwang is deputy minority Senate Leader and the ranking legislative leader on the Public Safety and Security Committee and Higher Education & Employment Committees and also serves as a member of the Transportation Committee.*

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## Hwang: State to Order Independent Review of Nursing Homes' Response to Covid-19

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Governor Ned Lamont is ordering an independent, third-party review to be conducted of the preparation and response to the Covid-19 pandemic inside of Connecticut's nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

"I am thrilled to see that Governor Lamont is taking a deeper look into what is happening with Connecticut's nursing homes and seeing where we can improve this

situation, especially should we ever face a similar health issue again,” State Senator Tony Hwang said .

Hwang moderated a “Connecticut Covid-19 Informational Update on Nursing Homes” on June 8 to discuss the impact the pandemic has had on nursing, rehabilitation and assisted living facilities that house vulnerable state residents.

“Through discussions since the start of this pandemic, I have learned that nursing homes have long needed attention and support to make improvements to their infrastructures and health service systems,” Hwang said. “Unfortunately the unusual circumstances presented by Covid-19 exacerbated and brought these issues front and center with devastating impact on residents, their families and frontline staff.”

The discussion highlighted the current major challenges, the lessons learned and the future plans for improvement that include infection and death rates and managing the disease, in-person visitations clarification, PPE availability, testing availability (now required), impact of social isolation, and aging in place

Hwang was joined by experts in the field of senior services and advocacy including State Senator Kevin Kelly, Aging and Insurance Committee, and an attorney specializing in elder law who shared staggering statistics on how the Covid-19 deaths inside nursing homes actually makes up 70% of all deaths in Connecticut and 15% of the total deaths caused by the virus nationwide. He called for transparency to enable legislators and the public need to know what nursing homes are doing to move forward.

Nora Duncan, with CT AARP, stated she is very concerned about the damaging impact of isolation on this population emotionally, and psychologically, but when it comes to the physical care that these residents depend on, that is “above and beyond what the nursing home is able to provide.” The AARP advocated for virtual visitation starting in March as the state closed down, and that ability was not granted until May.

Marie Allen, Southwest Connecticut Agency on Aging (SWCAA) encouraged nursing homes and assisted living facilities to communicate not only the changes, but WHY they needed to be made and what is being done to address the situation.

Penny Young, aging advocate, noted that the CT Commission on Women, Children and Seniors has been incredibly helpful to seniors. She is concerned that seniors are cut off during this quarantine since they may even lack cell phone or internet service.

Additionally, Deidre Gifford, interim commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Health, provided a statement, since she could not be on the call, that clarified the guidance from DPH on allowing outdoor visits and the increase of testing on staff and residents.

“The word needs to get out to people that they can see their older family members using proper social distancing and by wearing a mask,” stressed Hwang.

Hwang said the availability of testing and PPE is a problem for both staff and residents. He said that on June 1, Lamont issued Executive Order 7UU which requires staff at private and municipal nursing homes, residential communities and assisted living agencies to be tested weekly for the duration of the public health and civil preparedness emergency. These requirements have to be met, starting as early as June 14, but private managed residential communities and assisted living services agencies have until June 28, Hwang said.

The update was recorded and can be found at [CT AARP](#) and via the Southwest Connecticut Agency on Aging by clicking [here](#)

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# Shaban Announces Bid for 135th District Seat

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REDDING, CT - Former State Rep. John Shaban has announced his candidacy for re-election to the 135th General Assembly District seat he held for three terms from 2011 to 2017. Shaban did not run for a fourth term in 2016, opting instead to run for U.S. Congress against Jim Himes. The 135th District includes Easton, Redding and Weston.

“I will continue to focus on sensible solutions rather than symbolic gestures,” Shaban said. “While many in Hartford are great at spotting problems, too few pursue the fiscal policies needed to solve them. Talk is cheap, but great schools, good roads and a clean environment are not.”

For six years Shaban served on the Environment Committee as Ranking House Member, the Judiciary Committee, and the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee.

Shaban was an active leader in the fight against wasteful government spending, unpredictable tax and regulatory policies that inhibit job growth, and unfunded state and federal mandates. Throughout his service in the state’s House of Representatives, Shaban helped prepare alternative budget proposals designed to reduce state spending while tackling Connecticut’s crippling unfunded pension liabilities.

“Our state’s poor fiscal policies have eroded our home values, job market and tax base,” said Shaban. “We can still dig ourselves out, but we need prudent leadership to change our course.”

Shaban continues to advocate for greater local control of education and land use, and opposes forced regionalization of schools and services. “Our communities thrive when we lead and govern at the local level first,” he said.

He also seeks the creation of a Special Transportation Fund Trustee “to protect the people’s money from political shell games” and thereby avoid tolls.

While serving in the House, Shaban championed legislation to: establish greater local control over cell tower placement (HB 6520); create the Small Business Express Program (PA 12-123);

secure mandate relief for high-performing schools (PA 13-108); provide tax relief for families of fallen first responders (PA 13-204); help unemployed veterans (PA 13-63); and expand early childhood education and reading initiatives (PA 14-39, 15-137).

As an environmental lawyer and House leader on the Environment Committee, Shaban also helped draft and pass legislation to: secure more open space (PA 12-152); create the State’s GMO labeling paradigm (PA 13-183); draft fracking waste controls (PA 14-200); require micro bead and pesticide phase outs (PA 15-5); launch the Long Island Sound Blue Plan (PA 15-66); and create several brownfield remediation programs (PA 14-88, 16-115).

After leaving office in 2017, Shaban also served on the Board of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, Best Buddies International, and several other charitable organizations.

Shaban is a 26-year practicing attorney, specializing in commercial and corporate

litigation, and has an Environmental Law Degree. He is admitted in Connecticut and New York, all of the local federal courts, and the United States Supreme Court. Shaban has an “AV” peer and judicial rating (highest ethics and skills ranking), is a member of the ABA and Connecticut Bar Association, served as a Fact Finder/Arbitrator for the Connecticut Judicial Branch, and is a FINRA Arbitrator.

He has three sons, has been coaching youth football in Easton, Redding and Weston for over 15 years, and has served on numerous local boards and commissions.

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## Dunsby Bids Farewell

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First Selectman Adam Dunsby spent his final day in office clearing out personal items prior to turning over the reins to his successor, Dr. David Bindelglass. Dunsby served for three terms but did not seek re-election.

He summed up his time in office and his accomplishments as follows:

“As my time as Easton’s first selectman draws to a close, I extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the people of Easton for their support over these past six years. It has been a great privilege serving you, and I will cherish my time working with residents, officials, and staff.

Working together over these past years we have accomplished a lot and we should be

proud of our town:

Easton is in strong financial shape: Our debt has declined by half over the past six years, our unassigned fund balance has grown, we have maintained our AAA-credit rating, and our pension obligations are well-funded. Since 2013 the average annual property tax increase has been a bit under 0.5%, all while maintaining our excellent schools and providing tax relief for seniors.

Our town has some important new capital improvements, including a solar power array behind Samuel Staples Elementary School, which produces almost as much electricity as the school uses, as well as a pavilion and restrooms at the Morehouse fields.

Safety and communication are improved, including needed cell service for central Easton and an award-winning commitment to workplace safety. Our town website provides transparency and an easy-to-access portal into municipal government.

Lastly, a special thanks to the dozens of Easton residents who volunteer their time and expertise to our town's many boards and commissions. Easton cannot function without their service, and I encourage all residents to consider volunteering to continue to preserve and improve the town we all love.

I wish all Easton residents - especially our newly elected municipal officials - the best."