

# Crumbling foundations in the forefront of area legislators' minds

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HARTFORD — Crumbling foundation legislation is still in the forefront for area lawmakers, who are proposing bill this session that would eliminate the expiration date of the captive insurance company fixing foundations and allocate an additional \$100 million in state bonding.

The bipartisan crumbling foundation caucus is proposing bonding \$20 million per year for five years, beginning in 2023. Gov. Ned Lamont has committed to bonding the remaining \$40 million over the next two years that is part of a previous \$100 million allocation for crumbling foundations.

The Connecticut Foundation Solutions Indemnity Co. has proven to be effective, but has been forced to periodically halt new applications due to the lack of available funds.

“The current money is running out and we really need to have more funds,” Sen. M. Saud Anwar, D-South Windsor, said.

Rep. Timothy Ackert, R-Coventry, said he’s not thrilled to have to ask state taxpayers to pay more for crumbling foundations, adding that the federal government and insurance industry also should be contributing.

Nonetheless, he does support the measure and also intends to seek to establish quarry standards determining whether there is a safe level of pyrrhotite, the mineral causing foundations to deteriorate, to be used in concrete.

Reps. Thomas Delnicki, R-South Windsor, and Christopher Davis, R-Ellington, are supporting legislation that would place a special assessment on homeowner insurance providers in the state. While in the early stages, the proposal is expected to raise as much as \$80 million over five years, Delnicki said.

Davis said the proposal is designed to have a minimal impact on insurance companies because the cost would be spread over a five-year period and also would include language preventing the cost from being passed on to consumers, who already are paying a \$12 surcharge on their homeowners policies.

Another area of focus will be eliminating the sunset date for the captive insurance company that’s fixing foundations, as well as extending the tax abatements currently available to homeowners.

While “major strides” have been made in recent years to address the crisis, the issue “is always going to be a priority until it’s resolved, which won’t be any time soon,” Rep. Kurt Vail, R-Stafford, said.

“Crumbling foundations remain a big issue,” Delnicki said.

#### Other priorities

Ackert said he also intends to make sure there is sufficient funding to address evasive species in lakes, minimizing the cost for home improvement contractors and new home builders, and eliminating pensions from income taxes, which is one factor leading to older people moving out of state, he said.

“The key is we’ve got to find a way to make it more affordable to do business in the state of Connecticut,” he said.

Rep. Michael Winkler, D-Vernon, is proposing lowering the cost per page from 50 cents to 15 cents to copy public documents, and allowing people to take photographs of the pages for free.

He also hopes to increase the pension exemption from state income taxes for couples from \$100,000 to \$150,000, saying there’s “a marriage penalty” because the exemption for singles is \$75,000.

“A lot of people have saved over a long time to have really good retirement, and they don’t know why they should be taxed again,” Winkler said.

In order to pay for the loss of millions of dollars from the pension exemption change, Winkler is proposing to freeze the minimum estate tax at \$5.1 million rather than allowing it to increase as scheduled.