

On November 5, 2024, Nick Gauthier was elected as the new state representative for the towns of Waterford and Montville. For the first half of this year, he has been working in Hartford at the State Capitol, representing the two towns and their people in the state lawmaking process.

Gauthier graduated from Waterford High School in 2005 and found his interest in political science while studying at the University of Connecticut. He graduated from the University of New Haven with a Master's Degree in Public Administration and a passion to help people through political activism. Some of his most important issues include education funding and workers' rights.

Gauthier volunteered for numerous political campaigns, ranging from town to federal elections. In 2010, he was a Field Organizer for Richard Blumenthal's bid for the United States Senate. While helping get other people elected, he realized that he could better fight for the issues most important to him if he himself ran for office.

In 2019, Gauthier ran for and was elected to the Waterford Representative Town Meeting (RTM), and served on the body for six years. The RTM is the body that helps make decisions for the town of Waterford, such as creating local ordinances and overseeing the town budget.

Gauthier pushed for improvement through the RTM. Waterford High School band teacher Tim Fioravanti, who served with Gauthier, described him as a "big supporter of education, health, and safety."

While on the RTM, Gauthier decided to pursue a position in state government. Municipal governments have narrowly-tailored powers and functions outlined by the town charter, while state governments have much broader powers for policymaking.

Gauthier ran against Kathleen McCarty, who had represented Waterford in the House of Representatives for the ten years prior. Winning an election as a challenger is famously difficult, with upwards of 90% of elections being won by the incumbent. He attributes his success to door-to-door campaigning and conversations with individual constituents, not appealing to party membership. Whatever the strategy, it was an effective one, as he won the election by 174 votes.

The Connecticut legislature convened on January 8 of this year. With 151 members, the House of Representatives is too large to individually consider each of the thousands of bills introduced to the body. Instead, they split into committees of about 15, each of which reviews bills of a specific topic, such as Housing or Education.

In the first session, Gauthier served on the Labor and Government Administration committees. He was able to contribute to and help the House pass several bills, both in committee and out. One of these bills, SB 8, provides additional protections for striking workers. Another, SB 1, provides additional funding to public schools, especially for early and special education.

Gauthier describes the smaller size of the committees as one of their largest strengths. With fewer members, they can have more lively debate on bills and hold public hearings to hear outside opinions on bills, which help create laws that better represent the people.

Some of that connection to the people may be lost when the bill moves from committee to the full House. The voices shaping the bill that once came from the people are replaced by the voices of other politicians, leading to bills that may not be as representative. “The bill left the committee the way it did for a reason,” says Gauthier.

The General Assembly adjourned for the year on June 4. In the meantime, Gauthier has spent his time getting more connected to his community. He has frequented town events and local government meetings, such as the Board of Education or RTM.

Normally, the state legislature would only reconvene at the start of 2026 with the purpose of crafting a two-year budget. However, the legislature may meet for a special session this October to address issues such as a vetoed housing bill or the numerous federal cuts to healthcare and education funding.

Exactly what will happen remains to be seen. No matter what, though, Nick Gauthier will be there in Hartford, looking out for the people of Waterford.