



News from

COMPTROLLER KEVIN LEMBO

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COMPTROLLER LEMBO ANNOUNCES RESIGNATION

Comptroller Kevin Lembo announced on Friday that he will be resigning his position due to an ongoing medical condition, effective Dec. 31, 2021.

“It has been the honor of my life to serve the people of Connecticut as state comptroller,” Lembo said. “Over ten years ago, voters took a chance on a gay, vegetarian nerd that had never run for office in his life. I’ve worked every day since to represent this office with honesty, integrity, and a focus on the common good. Even now, I love the work that I do and the people I work with. Unfortunately, my health simply won’t allow me to continue to serve.”

As comptroller, Lembo has overseen innovative and nationally recognized health care reforms that have improved patient outcomes and saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. His proposal to grow the state’s reserves have led to an historic balance in the Rainy Day Fund and the elimination of billions in pension debt. His open government work has positioned Connecticut as a national leader in financial transparency.

Lembo has been diagnosed with a serious and debilitating cardiac condition that has recently been worsening in intensity and severity. After repeated consultations with a team of cardiologists, it was recommended that Lembo not continue working.

“I’m extremely proud of what we’ve accomplished together during my three terms in office,” said Lembo. “We’ve made Connecticut a model for government transparency, instituted innovative changes in the state health plan to lower costs while improving patient care, and wrote the plan that has led to record savings in the state’s Rainy Day Fund. While I’m disappointed that I’ll be unable to complete this term, the work that’s been done in the last 11 years has made Connecticut a better place to live, work and raise a family and that’s why I wanted this job in the first place. I feel confident that whoever follows me in this position has all the resources in place to continue this work and build on our successes.”

Before taking office in 2011, Lembo served as Connecticut’s first Healthcare Advocate. In that role, he successfully fought insurance companies on behalf of patients to reverse wrongly denied medical

claims. As comptroller, Lembo worked with labor and management to implement the nationally renowned Health Enhancement Program (HEP), a preventive care and chronic disease management initiative that has improved patient health and saved on long-term costs. Lembo has built on that work through aggressive and innovative contract negotiations that have grown Connecticut's health care sector and secured low prices for members of the state's health plans, saving taxpayers in the process.

Lembo has sought opportunities to extend the benefits of his health care work to everyone in Connecticut. The Connecticut Partnership Plan allows towns and cities to join with the state to buy health care. Currently, over 60,000 teachers, first responders, other municipal employees and their families are enrolled, many of whom would otherwise be stuck in high-deductible plans. Lembo has been a champion of a popular policy that would offer similar options to small businesses, nonprofits and individuals. Lembo also negotiated a deal that guarantees access to discounted insulin to everyone in the state living with diabetes.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lembo's office spearheaded the effort to grow testing capacity and help Connecticut hospitals and laboratories meet the urgent needs of state residents. Through creative and collaborative contracting, over 1.4 million tests were performed under contracts negotiated by the comptroller's office.

"Everyone deserves access to quality, affordable health care," said Lembo. "I'm fortunate to have the best doctors in the world to help me navigate this illness. The level of care you receive, and what you'll pay for it, should not be dependent on where you work. I've done my best to wield the power of the office in a way that helps level the playing field for everyone in Connecticut, but there's far more work to be done. It is a moral and economic imperative that we protect public health, and government has the ability to do that."

In his first term, Lembo raised concerns over the state's economic development strategy and how its success was being measured. He successfully fought for increased transparency measures that, for the first time, gave taxpayers access to see how their money was being invested. Building off that success, Lembo launched OpenConnecticut, a suite of online products that helped present the vast amount of data held by the comptroller's office in user-friendly applications. OpenConnecticut now includes the full checkbook ledger of the state as well as employee and retiree compensation, the status of the state budget and spending information for quasi-public agencies. Independent good government groups have praised the effort and consistently used it to rate Connecticut among the top states in the nation for financial transparency.

As the state's "chief fiscal guardian," Lembo was an impartial referee during the prolonged budgetary crisis of his first two terms. He honestly and accurately issued budget forecasts and provided economic analysis to help policymakers. He also introduced several measures to improve Connecticut's fiscal standing including legislation in 2015 to change the way the state builds its reserves.

Lembo proposed capturing excess revenues in particularly volatile categories and automatically depositing them into the Budget Reserve Fund ("Rainy Day Fund"). The measure also expanded the fund's cap to 15% of net General Fund appropriations and required any amount over that cap be used to pay down the state's pension debt. The bill garnered bipartisan support in the committee process and passed in that year's state budget. The formula was adjusted and implemented in 2017

and currently the fund is at maximum capacity. Additional pension payments have been made the last two fiscal years, estimated to save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars over the next two decades.

Within his agency, Lembo also achieved savings by implementing digital processes to save on paper, printing and postage, and improve efficiency. Tens of thousands of employees, retirees and vendors that had been receiving paper checks, tax information and other statements have been transitioned to online systems and the agency has used technology to virtually eliminate a backlog of retirement paperwork that had existed for decades.

Lembo also used his position to advocate for other areas of critical personal importance including racial justice, foster and adoptive care, LGBTQ rights, broadband access and more.

Early next year, two new initiatives led by Lembo will be launched. MyCT Savings will offer savings options for the more than 600,000 Connecticut workers who do not have a retirement program through their employer. The program is the result of legislation championed by Lembo and labor advocates and is being administered by the Connecticut Retirement Security Authority, of which Lembo serves as chair. Also in early 2022, the comptroller's office will launch a workers' compensation program for frontline workers who contracted COVID-19 on the job. The program, designed by the legislature, will help replace wages for workers who missed time due to illness and will help pay for funeral expenses for families of workers who died from the virus.

Lembo will leave office on Dec. 31, 2021. His successor will be named by Governor Ned Lamont.

"I came into this job believing that Connecticut was capable of great things, and I leave knowing that's true. We have all the raw materials to grow into an equitable economic powerhouse that supports a supremely talented workforce. To get there, it will take hard work, sacrifice and a true sense of community. Fortunately, I've seen a limitless amount of compassion, decency and fortitude from the people of our state. I've never been more certain that Connecticut's best days lie ahead, and I look forward to seeing them with my friends and neighbors in the best state in nation.

"Thank you to my spouse Charles, our three wonderful children, our families, the incredible staff of the comptroller's office and the countless others who have made this work so rewarding and so impactful."

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