



# New state laws will affect probate, lawn care, absentee ballots

By JOHN BARRY

The Bulletin

Posted Dec 30, 2012 @ 08:50 PM



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Property owners will be banned from using fertilizers or compost containing phosphorous on their lawns starting Tuesday, thanks to one of several state laws that will go into effect.

The ban exempts farms and golf courses, but it calls for a moratorium for all users from December through February and prohibits anyone from spreading fertilizers or compost within 20 feet of a body of water.

When it washes into water, phosphorous stimulates the growth of plants and algae, threatening fish and other water life. Connecticut is the 12th state to ban fertilizers and compost that contain phosphorous.

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Voters who are permanently disabled will be sent absentee ballots. Disabled voters now receive applications for absentee ballots, so the new law saves a step, as well as postage.

A new law passed in the last session of the Legislature changed how probate courts operate. Many of the provisions already went into effect in July or October. One change taking effect Tuesday lets probate judges transfer contested matters involving children, such as custody, guardianship and termination of parental rights, to new regional children's probate courts that started in October.

A related law eliminates a \$25 fee for each probate hearing beyond the first and each hour after the first hour of a hearing.

Minor lawbreakers will find changes in the maximum fines and prison sentences they face for dozens of misdemeanor violations. The Legislature's overhaul of misdemeanor laws also made several violations punishable only by fines that can be mailed in, and it eliminated 11 violations that already are covered by other laws.

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