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***TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 21, 2007***

I appreciate the opportunity to support Senate Bill 41, An Act Concerning Clean Contracting Standards.

A State Contracting Standards Board was one of the key proposals I made more than three years ago -- one among 17, many eventually endorsed by the Governor and adopted by the legislature. I continue to believe that it is vital to integrity in state contracting.

This board would establish a uniform procurement code, review and approve as well as supervise state contracts and terminate contracts obtained through unethical behavior. The proposal also establishes strong oversight of privatization contracts with for-profit companies.

For many years, the State Properties Review Board has been a bulwark against unethical state acquisition or sale of property. This independent nonpartisan watchdog has prevented uneconomic and potentially illegal state property transactions. Its mere existence has been a deterrent to many such transactions.

With authority to audit state contracts and take action to void contracts awarded through unethical impropriety, the new contracts board can serve similar purposes for state contracts as the State Properties Review Board provides for state land transactions.

There must be tough scrutiny of privatization contracts as this measure envisions. Contracts that eliminate state employee jobs and outsource functions to a private company should only be approved after a thorough, careful and independent analysis of their costs and benefits.

I commend the committee's diligence and hard work to improve ethics in state contracting. I urge the committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 41.