

Comments to the
Government Administration & Elections Committee
On the Proposal to Change the
Candidate Ballot Petition Law (S.B. 1310)

Good morning. My name is Paul Sutherland and I am from Ridgefield. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am here to clear up some misconceptions that Senator Freedman, my state Senator, has about the proposal of Secretary of State Bysiewicz to change the existing candidate ballot petition law. The proposed change (specifically Section 8, subsection (a)) would move the deadline for submitting candidate petitions from a day after the August primary to several days before the primary. This would simply restore the relative filing date to the way it was before the primary date was changed a few years ago.

Senator Freedman claims "this is all about Democrats being angry that Lieberman managed to get on the ballot." Well, Senator, I am here to tell you that is not what it is about. First of all, I am not angry. I must admit to being a little disappointed that when the General Assembly changed the primary date, they weren't careful to make the appropriate ancillary changes. I would like to suggest that if the petition filing date is changed, it should be tied to the primary date, so that the next time the primary date changes, both dates change in tandem.

However, what this proposal is really about is full disclosure in politics, as opposed to bait and switch. Last year, Connecticut Chief Justice William J. Sullivan was accused of an ethics violation for withholding a Supreme Court ruling in order to help his protégé through the appointment process to become his successor. The situation here is not that dissimilar. Withholding information from the public for political purposes is never good public policy. Government and politics work best when they operate in the sunshine.

Senator Freedman, in her press release explaining her position on this proposal, says that "Our laws should make it easier for the electorate to choose who they want to represent them...encouraging a wide variety of people to run for public office." Well, let's be honest about this. There is nothing in this proposal that would have prevented Senator Lieberman from running either as a Democrat or as an independent, or for that matter, as a Democrat and then as an Independent, as he in fact did. It simply would have required him to declare his honest intentions to the voters, giving us a fair chance to make an informed judgment, before casting our ballots.

I'm sure you will all agree that an informed electorate is the cornerstone to a strong democracy. Please demonstrate to the voters of our state that you will do what is best for democracy here in Connecticut, and support this proposal.

Thank you.