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**Testimony of Phil Sherwood
Of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG)
March 19, 2007**

Good morning, Chairperson Slossberg, Chairman Caruso, and distinguished GAE Committee members. My name is Phil Sherwood and I am the Legislative Director with the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG). CCAG has approximately 30,000 member families in the state of CT and I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today in regards to HB7386.

For the first time in our nation, a state legislature passed a comprehensive campaign finance reform bill that levels the playing field and creates a mechanism for individuals to run for public office without being dependent on special interest money. Members of the General Assembly and especially members of this committee should be commended for setting in motion a new system that sets the stage for the next state elections to be owned by the voters, not moneyed interests. CCAG would like to applaud and pledge support for further efforts that aim to strengthen or refine this historic reform such as the concepts put forth in HB7386.

CCAG supports efforts in HB7386 to mandate electronic filing but believe that it should currently apply to all races and not a select few. E-filing is essential to having a streamlined and transparent public financing system especially in light of the need to provide matching funds to participating candidates. As written, HB7386 looks to amend statutes to require e-filing once a candidate has reached a \$30,000 threshold rather than the existing \$250,000 threshold.

Currently as written, many primaries for the House Representatives would not meet the required \$30,000 threshold to e-file as they need to raise \$5,000 in seed money to receive \$10,000. To the extent that there is any threshold set to require e-filing, it should be set at a low enough level to ensure that all candidates eligible for public financing and all candidates that may trigger matching funds are required to e-file. Ultimately, we believe all candidates should be required to e-file their reports so as to encourage accurate and prompt disclosure. It's important to have a streamlined process that is quick and transparent and that allows the system to work as envisioned.

CCAG also supports the concepts within the bill that require Contribution Cards for qualifying contributions for the Clean Elections' Program as we believe it will help in the verification process.

CCAG would like to express concern with the concept in HB7386 that changes the requirement that individuals must be registered to vote in order to make a qualifying contribution to a candidate of their choice. The goal of this is to provide a mechanism that helps candidates know that they have met the amount required for seed money. It's CCAG's position that this concept undermines the spirit of public financing, a system that has promised to increase people's ownership and participation, by deliberately preventing individuals from participating in the clean elections process. We also believe that the concept of the Contribution Card in the bill makes the need to shut people out of the process for verification purposes moot.

We again would like to thank the committee for their courage in recently passing the historic reforms and are encouraged by the commitment from the committee to refine the reform and make changes to the reform that will aid in the implementation of this new system.

Phil Sherwood,
Connecticut Citizen Action Group