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**Testimony of Phil Sherwood  
Before the GAE, Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso and other members of the GAE committee. My name is Phil Sherwood, I am the Legislative Director for the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG). CCAG has approximately 30,000 member families across CT and I appreciate the opportunity to comment on several bills before your committee today.

CCAG supports both **H. B. 5504 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL LOBBYING** and **H. B. 5505 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM**.

There has been much attention given to and success in refining the state's ethics laws, especially for individuals who lobby and or seek to do business with the state. CCAG is committed to granting citizens the protections and transparencies that CT's ethics laws grant at the state level to the local level.

Individuals who lobby at the municipal level have greater power to influence the outcome of policy and decisions of local government officials than they do at the state level because of smaller legislative bodies. There also exists a greater incentive for impropriety to occur at the local level based on the current lack of transparency that is provided when lobbying activities are reported.

It's essential that CT, at the least, do the bare minimum and require that individuals who lobby at the municipal level register as lobbyists and are regulated like lobbyists.

Along those lines, it is our hope that the legislature will mirror some of the successful reforms we've seen at the state level by considering enabling legislation that would allow municipalities the ability to protect taxpayers by limiting or banning campaign contributions from municipal lobbyists, city contractors and their immediate family members to those seeking municipal office.

In an era of hundred million dollar presidential campaigns and rock star-like candidates that dominate the focus towards federal issues, the significant and direct impact that local government has on citizens is often overlooked. It's vital that the legislature acts by passing **H.B. 5504 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL LOBBYING** so that public trust in local government is not undermined and that the perverse incentives that exist for improprieties at the local level are challenged and addressed.

CCAG also wants to stress strong organizational support for **H.B. 5505 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM**.

This is a vitally important bill that is needed to ensure that the historic campaign finance reform legislation that has been passed, and now enacted, works as envisioned. This also works to provide a needed timeline for participants of the Clean Elections Program and successfully establishes mechanisms that provide more transparency for the public. This bill enables the State Elections Enforcement to administer the Clean Elections Program in a more efficient and fair manner. Below is a brief description of some of the important parts of the bill:

## **1. Lowers the Threshold for Mandatory Electronic Filing to \$10,000 from \$250,000**

- Crucial to the Program's goal of providing the public with transparency, and accurate and prompt disclosure of campaign finances.
- Electronic filing is required in most major public financing jurisdictions
- Mandatory electronic serves a practical role in administering the Program
  - i. Each campaign to enter its own data helps to ensure that the data entered is accurate.
  - ii. Speedy grant approvals. The Commission has a short turnaround time in approving application (3 days currently, 4 days in the bill). Having data entry people enter hundreds of contribution entries burns valuable time, which could affect the grant approval process.

## **2. Enables Compliance Investigations of Campaigns During the Two Months Preceding An Election**

- Current law prohibits any inspection or investigation of a campaign during a two month window preceding an election.
- To ensure that the CEP grant money is being spent properly, the SEEC should be allowed to conduct spot checks. (Much like the Voter Audits for the optical scan machine that ensure the system is working properly and is vital in order to build public confidence in the process)

## **3. Initial Grant Application Schedule**

- This spells out deadlines for submitting grant applications. (reads a little funny but it basically prevents applications being submitted before a weekend and thus eating up valuable time.)
- Gives the CEP adequate time to approve the applications.
- Also, spells out that the Commission would meet twice a week for a month in the summer.

## **4. Supplemental Reporting, Receiving, and Spending Supplemental Grant Money**

### **Acknowledges *Spending Ability* of Nonparticipating Opponent**

- This section of the bill equates money raised in excess of the limits with money spent in excess of the limit.
- Currently, Connecticut's statute only provides for supplemental grants if a nonparticipating opponent *makes an excess expenditure*.
- What if a candidate amasses a huge war-chest and exceeds the limits? He/she could unleash expenditures at the last minute?