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**Testimony of Andy Sauer**  
**Executive Director, Common Cause in Connecticut**  
Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee

**Wednesday, March 12, 2008**

Good morning. My name is Andy Sauer, and I am the Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut. Common Cause in Connecticut is nonpartisan, nonprofit citizens' lobby that works to improve the way Connecticut's government operates. We have more than 5,000 members in Connecticut.

We would like to thank the co-chairs of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, Rep. Chris Caruso and Sen. Gayle Slossberg, and the members of the committee for holding a public hearing on ethics and campaign finance reform, two subjects that Connecticut Common Cause considers vital to democracy.

Connecticut Common Cause **opposes** the following legislative proposals:

S.B. 675 — **An Act Concerning the Extension of Lobbyist Restrictions to Certain State Employees.**

Connecticut Common Cause **supports** the following legislative proposals:

H.B. 5888 — **An Act Concerning Revisions to the Optical Scan Voting System.**

H.B. 5890 — **An Act Concerning Municipal Election Contribution Bans.**

H.B. 5896 — **An Act Concerning the Publication of State Agency Regulations.**

**S.B. 675 — An Act Concerning the Extension of Lobbyist Restrictions to Certain State Employees**

Connecticut Common Cause is opposed to this bill because we question the rationale, purpose and the timing of legislation designed to reclassify legislative liaisons as communicator lobbyists.

As most understand, a legislative liaison (at least in Connecticut) is a state employee from a state agency, office or department who serves as an intermediary between their office, commission or department and the Connecticut General Assembly. Their responsibilities include, among other things, representing the agency's position to legislators, keeping their agency informed of all legislative matters and responding to legislators' requests for information as it relates to their state agency. They are state employees, so by definition they represent the people of Connecticut, inasmuch as it relates to their agency, and they are bound by the state's code of ethics.

The Connecticut General Assembly enacts laws and often it is up to the state's agencies to interpret and implement those laws. The various offices, departments and commissions are on the front lines of public policy, and much of what is decided on the legislative level impacts their ability to carry out their state-mandated duties. No one expects our elected officials to be experts in all things, but the people of Connecticut expect our elected officials to have access to those who are experts — especially those who are employed by the state of Connecticut. It is impractical to ask, for example, a Department of Transportation engineer to be on hand for every question regarding state highways and roads, and thus neglect their duties. However, it is a legislative liaison's job to answer a multitude of questions on behalf of a state agency or at the very least chase down the answer from other expert sources.

Additionally, there are critical differences between a legislative liaison and a communicator lobbyist. First, a communicator lobbyist represents the interests of others in exchange for money. A legislative liaison represents the interests of the people of Connecticut insomuch as it relates to the agency they are employed by. Second, a communicator lobbyist generally works aggressively in furtherance of legislation – disseminating information, conducting vote counts and rallying supporters. A legislative liaison is more of an intermediary between the state agency and the legislature – often relaying information, setting up meetings and following legislation. When a liaison does work in furtherance of legislation or budgetary matters, it is rarely at an aggressive level and at the direction of the head of the state agency, who like the legislative liaison, represents the interests of the people of Connecticut.

Connecticut Common Cause questions the timing and the purpose of S.B. 675. If it has been drafted in reaction to the events of 2007 when a legislative liaison had a questionable relationship with a legislation, nothing in S.B. 675 would prevent that incident from occurring. One of the only discernable results of S.B. 675 would be that legislative liaisons would not be permitted into the House or Senate chambers. What occurred in the 2007 incident involving a legislative liaison did take place in either the House or Senate chambers, thus S.B. 675 is not a proper response to the perceived problem. If the Legislature wishes to address preventative measures to the 2007 incident, it should consider strengthening the conflict of interest provision of the State Code of Ethics, not hampering the abilities of legislative liaisons to represent the interests of the people of Connecticut.