



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION
AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

March 13, 2009

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Senate Bill 615 An Act Concerning the Filling of Nomination Vacancies by Political Parties

The State Elections Enforcement Commission provides the following testimony concerning Senate Bill 615.

Our Commission proposal House Bill 6662 An Act Concerning Certain Revisions to the Citizens' Election Program offers language that eliminates the uncertainty for participating campaigns as to grant amounts and expenditure limits in races with vacancies in nomination. Our proposed language is responsive to the issues identified in Senate Bill 615.

As it stands now, if a participating candidate is "opposed" by a major party candidate, he or she is eligible to apply for a full grant in that race. If a participating candidate is "unopposed," he or she is only eligible for one-third of the full grant amount. In the 2008 General Assembly election cycle, certain participating candidates were met with uncertainty as to the implications for their grants in instances where the participating candidate had a nominated opponent who withdrew subsequent to the deadline for nomination and was not immediately replaced. As described by several candidates participating in the Citizens' Election Program (the "Program"), in some instances, such nominated opponents are not replaced until close to the deadline to fill a vacancy (which is 21 days prior to the election). This generally leads to periods of uncertainty for participating candidates who may be uncertain about how much may be spent during the election. Such uncertainty could de-incentivize participation in the Program. Indeed, several participating candidates informed Commission staff that they did not know whether they would participate in the Program due to the uncertainty created by such issues.

Accordingly, the Commission's proposal sets a firm deadline for determining opposition status. Under the Commission's proposal, a participating candidate that faces an opponent on the statutory deadline for nomination shall be deemed "opposed" for the entire election campaign and will be eligible to apply for and receive a full grant according to this designation. This will create certainty for participating candidates regarding both their grant amounts and expenditure limits for the duration of the election regardless of the shifting ballot status of their opposition – something participating campaigns have no control over. This is important for incentivizing participation in the voluntary Program and protecting the candidates who elect to join the Program.

Thank you for your consideration of the Commission's views on the issues included in this bill.

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