



CGA Appropriations Committee

March 27, 2009 Public Hearing

Comments Submitted By Christine S. Horrigan, Government Director

**Opposition to:**

**Sections 12, 13 and 19 of Governor's Bill No. 6363**

***AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS  
CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT, CONSERVATION, DEVELOPMENT,  
REGULATION, PROTECTION, JUDICIAL AND CORRECTIONS***

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My name is Christine Horrigan. I am Government Director for the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, a statewide organization with over 2100 members dedicated to improving the electoral process. On behalf of the League, I would like to thank you for giving the League the opportunity to comment upon the portion of Governor's Bill No. 6363 that relates to the State Elections Enforcement Commission and the Citizens' Election Fund.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut was proud to support the campaign finance reform law passed in 2005. Today, Governor's Bill No. 6363 places those reforms—and in particular, public financing of campaigns—in jeopardy. Specifically, the League opposes the Governor's proposal to repeal Connecticut General Statute Section 9-7c which appears in Section 19 of the bill. We also oppose the Governor's proposal to require all costs incurred in the administration of the Citizens' Election Fund to be paid from that Fund, as opposed to the General Fund as is currently the case. This change can be found in Sections 12 and 13 of the bill.

***The League opposes the repeal of Connecticut General Statute Section 9-7c.*** This law was enacted in 2004 to protect the SEEC from retaliation after Governor Rowland, under investigation by the SEEC and the State Ethics Commission, attempted unsuccessfully to consolidate those agencies under the guise of saving money. Repeal of this law would allow the Governor to reduce the SEEC's budget without legislative approval and to ignore the SEEC's budget request and substitute her own. The SEEC plays a vital role in our democracy by ensuring fair elections and must be protected from political retribution. The Citizens' Election Fund must also be protected against future "raids" without legislative approval—a special concern for candidates who seek public financing to run competitive campaigns and who rely on the Citizens' Election Program being adequately funded to meet its obligations under the law.

The League urges you to just say "No" to repealing the important safeguards contained in Section 9-7c.

*The League also opposes a requirement that all costs incurred in the administration of the Citizens' Election Fund be paid from that Fund, rather than from the General Fund.* We note that the Governor's Recommended Budget consolidates the funding for the SEEC into the Citizens' Election Fund and appears to require the SEEC to pay for fringe benefits for its entire staff out of the Fund. While we don't pretend to be budget experts, we would note that the SEEC's mission encompasses more than just the Citizens' Election Program and that it does not make sense (at least to us) to roll all of its funding into that program. We are also concerned that the Governor's proposal that the administrative costs be paid from the Fund represents a hidden cut to the Citizens' Election Fund. The League strongly opposes any further cuts to, or transfers from, the Citizens' Election Fund.

With 75% of candidates who ran for office in 2008 participating in the Citizens' Election Program, we know that public financing of campaigns works. As one of our good government colleagues recently put it, "democracy and accountability are too important to be sacrificed—even during economic hard times." In 2005, Connecticut enacted sweeping campaign finance reforms designed to restore the faith of its people in government. The League encourages you to stand firmly behind those reforms, to reject any further cuts to the Citizens' Election Fund and to ensure that the SEEC is appropriately funded and protected from political retaliation.

Thank you.