



**Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
February 17, 2009**

Support of Funding for DEP and the Council on Environmental Quality

Submitted by: Karen Burnaska, Director, Natural Resources

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a non-partisan, statewide organization comprised of over 2,100 members and committed to effective public policy and the active involvement of citizens in their government. On behalf of the League, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on these important issues.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) performs essential services for our communities, it already has too few staff, and needs funding to meet the demands of the department. The Governor's proposed budget fails to provide adequate funds in the General Fund for necessary staffing. The League supports funding DEP staffing at the level needed to meet the department's significantly increased responsibilities.

Since 1971 the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has been pushing for better protection of our natural resources and recommending priorities for Connecticut's environmental policies. The CEQ has provided critical research, brought attention to a broad variety of environmental issues, and should continue as an independent watchdog agency. In its most recent report, the CEQ takes a comprehensive view and points out multiple instances where Connecticut is not on track to meet established goals, for example, for sewage-free rivers, preserving farmland, waste management and recycling. The report offers specific recommendations to correct the gaps in environmental policy and performance. The Governor's proposed budget eliminates funding for CEQ. The League supports retaining funds to allow CEQ to continue its independent status.

These are difficult economic times, but maintaining adequate funding for DEP staffing and funding the CEQ as an independent agency is critical to the long-term environmental health of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.