



CGA Appropriations Committee

December 9, 2009 Public Hearing

Comments by Cheryl Dunson, Public Issues Vice President

and Christine Horrigan, Government Director

**Opposition to:**

Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan Proposal to Further Reduce Citizens' Election Fund

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On behalf of the over 2100 members of the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, we appreciate the opportunity to comment upon the portion of the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan that relates to the Citizens' Election Fund.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut was proud to support the campaign finance reform law passed in 2005. We recognize that in grave financial times all state agencies and commissions must strive to help "fill the gap" in the state budget. Over the past year, the Fund has sustained repeated cuts totaling approximately \$32,000,000.

Any further cuts to the Fund will cripple the program. Simply put, candidates will not sign up for public financing if they believe that the money won't be there or will be insufficient to run competitive campaigns.

In its hugely successful inaugural cycle, candidates who participated in the program were able to focus on the concerns of voters, rather than devoting the majority of their time to "dialing for dollars." Isn't that where the focus should be when seeking public office? As one of our good government colleagues put it, "democracy and accountability are too important to be sacrificed—even during economic hard times."

As we struggle with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, voters must have faith that legislators will make policy decisions in the public interest, not to benefit deep-pocketed interest groups. The League of Women Voters urges the Committee to oppose the proposed reduction to the Citizen Election Fund.

While we oppose this cut, we thank the Governor for her leadership in taking the initiative to "fix" the Citizens' Election Program. We hope that the legislature will follow the Governor's lead and move quickly in special session to repeal Section 9-717 (the "reversion clause") and address the constitutional concerns raised by the district court's ruling.