
CONNECTICUT DEMOCRATS

State Chair Nancy J. DiNardo State Vice Chair Rep. Steve Fontana Secretary Barbara C. Gordon Treasurer Emma W. Pierce

TESTIMONY OF NANCY DINARDO, CHAIRWOMAN CONNECTICUT DEMOCRATIC PARTY BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTION COMMITTEE ON FRIDAY MARCH 13, 2009

Good morning Sen. Slossberg, Rep. Spallone and members of the GA&E Committee.

I consider it a great honor to come before you to testify on matters that relate to elections and the newly adopted campaign finance reforms. Today, I come before you to speak on H.B. 6662 and I hope that you will consider revising some of the issues that have arisen in the Citizens Election Program.

Although there are some positive parts of H.B. 6662, I strongly urge that you not set a limit, on the Party Committee organizational expenditure for Governor of fifty thousand dollars and thirty-five thousand for the Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, State Comptroller, State Treasurer and Secretary of the State. I think that these amounts will prevent the State Party Committee from effectively advocating and supporting statewide candidates. The amount set forth in this bill in all likelihood would be used up in a small portion of the state. As you know, a statewide race is very expensive and the candidates in these races will be relying on the State Party to assist them in educating the voters of Connecticut regarding their position on issues.

Separate from the bills you are hearing today, I would like to offer my position on a couple campaign finance related matters. I ask that you consider my positions when you are discussing the many issues that have arisen since the passage of the Citizen Election Program

I would like to suggest that local Party Committees be allowed to provide unlimited in-kind contributions (phones, literature etc) to Municipal Candidates. The original bill allowed for unlimited in-kind contributions but it was later limited to three thousand dollars. As many of you know, it is the local Party Committee who provides the necessary tools for a municipal candidate to run an effective campaign and the current limit is too low to permit effective support. If you would not consider broadening the in-kind contributions to unlimited, I ask that you consider raising the limit to ten thousand dollars.

Furthermore, I think that this committee should clarify the term "Participate" as used in the current legislation and allow a Lobbyist or State Contractor to attend a Candidate Committee or Party Committee fundraiser but not contribute to the fundraising event. I think the law, as it is written today, violates a person's right to freely associate with an individual or group.

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Paid for by Democratic State Central Committee, Emma Pierce, Treasurer

Contributions to Democratic State Central Committee are not deductible as charitable contributions under the Internal Revenue Code

Similarly, this committee should consider allowing the spouse or the children of a Lobbyist or State Contractor to contribute and attend a Party Committee fundraiser.

In addition, the current law which requires that a donor fill out a contribution form listing employer and occupation every time a donation of \$50.00 or less is made to a Party Committee should be revised. If a contributor has already filled out a form during the year I think they should not be required to fill out a form every time they make a donation, often in small amount to a Town Committee. For example, Town Committees hold bake sales and pot luck dinners -- garner the contributors' information for the purchase of a cupcake or a bowl of chili is an unnecessary burden on the volunteers on a Town Committee

Finally, I urge you to change 9-608 Section (3), to eliminate the requirement that a Party Committee obtain a signature and determine that a donor is not a principal of a state contractor or prospective state contractor within three days for any donation over \$100 for an online donation. To allow for administrative processing, a period of 10 business days is far more reasonable and realistic.

I believe the changes I am proposing would give our Party a tremendous boost and more importantly would ensure that local party members will rejoin the team without worrying about whether they can contribute to a state and local party committee or at least attend an event and rejoin the democratic process.

I appreciate your time and attention to these proposals and I'm happy to take any questions