

# State of Connecticut

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**Testimony Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee  
State Comptroller Nancy Wyman  
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Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, Senator McLachlan, Representative Hetherington and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I am State Comptroller Nancy Wyman and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for consideration of my legislative proposal.

I would like to testify in support for *House Joint Resolution 113, "Resolution Proposing An Amendment To The State Constitution Concerning The Length Of Term For Members Of The General Assembly."* Across the country states are dealing with the largest fiscal crisis and economic downturn in recent memory. The state must address this budget crisis for this year and the next biennium, but it also creates an opportunity to make changes that restructure and reduce state spending in the long term as well.

This proposed constitutional amendment would provide for four year terms for both houses of the General Assembly and stagger those terms accordingly. It makes accommodations for the decennial census by electing representatives and senators for two year terms in the fourth and fifth general elections. Extending the terms of office for the General Assembly will, under our new system of public financing of campaigns, significantly reduce the costs of our election process.

Currently, State Senators, if qualified, for a general election are awarded grants of \$85,000.00 for major party candidates for a contested election and State Representatives are awarded \$25,000.00. The estimated spending for each two year election is \$13,670,000.00 without factoring in the potential spending for primaries and minor party candidates. Extending the term of office to four years would save the State over the biennium approximately \$6,835,000 with the potential for greater savings if primaries and minor party candidate spending are factored also factored.

There are currently five states that have four year terms for both houses of the Legislature and thirty-seven states that have four year terms for their State Senate. The majority, twenty-seven states, have staggered four year terms.

It is true that this savings will not be realized in the current biennium, but approval of this measure will reduce spending in the out years of the budget. In addition, by increasing

the length of terms for members of the General Assembly you enable individuals who are elected to focus their energies on learning the process and the issues and not focusing on raising money for the next election. Public financing of campaigns has alleviated a large portion of the fund raising burden, but extending that process to four years from the current two goes one step further.

In addition, I would like to offer support and recommendations for *Senate Bill 1144, "An Act Concerning Flexible Work Schedules and Telecommuting Options for State Employees."* My agency has successfully utilized a voluntary schedule reduction program for our employees for years. It is currently administered on a quarterly basis permitting the employee and management to frequently assess the needs of the agency.

The current bill provides for the program to be administered for periods of not less than six months. I believe that restricting the program to six month periods of time does not permit sufficient flexibility to reassess and re-evaluate agency needs. I would request that the committee consider amending the language to provide for period of not less than three months and not more than six months. Recognizing the uncertainty of our current economic situation, I believe that we need to leave agencies with the greatest amount of flexibility to meet operations.

Section two of the bill provides for the implementation of a flexible work schedule program. Again, under existing collective bargaining agreements with units representing employees of the Comptroller's Office we have successfully utilized alternative work schedule programs. Efforts to extend this type of program to a larger number of state employees should be encouraged.

Section three of the bill provides for a phased in retirement program which would permit employees to essentially take advantage of the voluntary schedule reduction program if they are within five years of their retirement eligibility, but giving full credit for salary for purposes of retirement calculations as if they had worked a full schedule. I have some concerns with regard to this proposal and the corresponding impact on the retirement fund.

Both Tier I and Tier IIa require employees to contribute a portion of their salary to the retirement fund. If the employee takes advantage of a voluntary schedule reduction program resulting in a reduction in their salary there is also a corresponding reduction in the amount contributed to the retirement fund. If the employee is treated as if they earned the full salary without requiring the employee to contribute to the retirement fund the retirement fund contributions will go down. The actuarially required contributions to the fund would still have to be made and the employer contribution to the fund will need to be increased to account for the total contribution. It is unclear that this proposal would result in any savings to the state.

Lastly, the bill requires the Commissioner of Administrative Services to facilitate telecommuting opportunities in state government, expands the factors to be taken into account in determining the benefits of telecommuting and permits the telecommuting to

be authorized by the agency head only. Allowing agency heads to approve telecommuting gives the person most knowledgeable about agency operations and needs authority to determine what is best for its employees and its business operations.

I would again note that restricting agencies to not less than a six month period of time may not provide adequate flexibility to meet agency needs. Finally, under current telecommuting policy managers are prohibited from being permitted to telecommute. I believe that whether or not a manager can take advantage of any aspect of a telecommuting program is a decision best left to the agency head and to the employee to determine. I would request the committee consider this fact as this legislation moves forward.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.