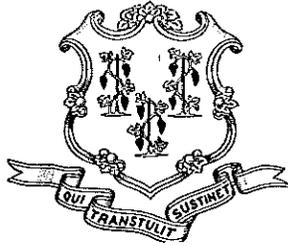


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State of Connecticut  
SENATE

DEPUTY PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

*Chair*

Commerce Committee

*Member*

Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee  
Legislative Management Committee  
Transportation Committee

March 23, 2009

I would like to thank the Chairs of the GAE committee and the ranking members for raising SJR 71.

I want to laud you for your vision and your willingness to think anew about the structure of our State government, particularly about the structure of the legislative branch. I thank you for taking the concepts of proposed Senate Bill 611 and incorporating them into SJR 71.

I begin with a premise.

Now is the time for new ideas. Now is the time for bold ideas. Now is the time to change the way we are doing things to make our actions more efficient, more effective and more accountable.

It is in this spirit that I recommend to you a new legislative structure, based not on two redundant houses, but simply on one accountable chamber, in short, a unicameral legislature.

A unicameral legislature will be more efficient. It could and should save money for our taxpayers. If, as this bill proposes, there were sixty representatives each reflecting approximately 60,000 residents, that would reduce the number of total representatives from the current 187 to the proposed sixty, yielding more than a 2/3 reduction in the number of total positions. This could allow the 60 representatives to become full time, draw a decent salary and still save the State an appreciable amount of dollars in the salary account.

Likewise on the legislative staff side of the equation, there could be a strengthening of the current legislative offices, including perhaps a General Accounting Office (GAO) or perhaps an Inspector Generals' office or both, and while at the same time saving total expenditures. The net result would be a stronger and more effective legislature, one that can both better predict and evaluate the results of its actions.

A unicameral legislature would, I believe, be more accountable and efficient with only one body responsible for legislation. The current practice of bills "dying on the Calendar" could end. Likewise, our committee work would become more important. There would be much less of a tendency to move along a bill as a "work in progress". Votes in committee would have much more meaning. With only one chamber there would be no blaming the other chamber if as today a bill passes in one chamber and is not taken up in the other. Final action would be, indeed, final action.

This greater accountability would be more even more so if you incorporate my suggestion for the legislature to become "full time". This change would vastly strengthen the oversight function of the

legislature, which today is weak and understaffed. It would allow for legislators to gain greater knowledge in their areas of cognizance and become expert in that area. Along with a four-year term, a unicameral legislature would end the wasteful practice of the yearly deluge of thousands of bills that are introduced with ultimately only a few hundred bills being passed. It would be a strong attempt at improving the quality of both the process of legislation and the product of our deliberations.

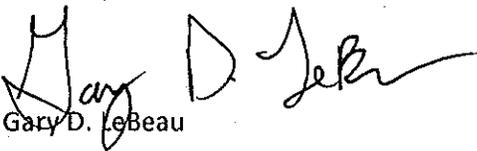
I would further suggest, although I would not recommend this as part of this legislation (which is a constitutional amendment) that the number of committees be cut approximately in half, and that for example a "Ways and Means" committee with the power to both make expenditures and to levy taxes, replace the current Finance and Appropriations Committees.

I know that a unicameral legislature does not seem to be a familiar idea. However, most Town Councils, Boards of Education and (in other states) county governments are unicameral. Nebraska is unicameral. Many countries are also unicameral, they include: Sweden, New Zealand, Portugal, Cost Rica, Hungary, Slovenia and Iceland. Puerto Rico voted to become Unicameral by an 81% margin in 2005, although the legislature did not heed the advice of the vote. Most of these unicameral legislatures have been implemented within the past fifty years. Indeed, when this change has been proposed to the electorate, it has proven to be very popular.

So I ask you today, as you have had the vision and the courage to bring this bill up before this committee, to have the further vision and the courage to allow the statewide electorate to vote on this proposal, and to trust in their judgment as they voice their opinion.

I sincerely thank you for allowing me testify on this important concept and I will certainly be willing to do what I can to help shape, clarify and advance this bill.

Sincerely,



Gary D. LeBeau

Senator, 3<sup>rd</sup> district