



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

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**TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION  
AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

**March 13, 2009**

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**Senate Bill 1107 – An Act Concerning Electronic Filing of Campaign Reports**

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An Act Concerning Electronic Filing of Campaign Reports will bring Connecticut into the fold of model states that emphasize transparency in political campaign funding, and would secure our position as a national leader in campaign financing reform. It is the SEEC's priority bill for this session.

Since 2003, the nonpartisan nonprofit California Voter Foundation has been studying the campaign disclosure and electronic filing systems in each of the 50 states, and has issued a report entitled Grading State Disclosure. Regrettably, CT has earned no better than a D in each year, and has recently been ranked 35th. One of the principal reasons was that the campaign law required mandatory electronic filing only of statewide candidates who raise at least ¼ million dollars. CT is dead last in that area, compared to the rest of the country.

As part of the comprehensive campaign finance reform enacted in 2005, the Commission was given responsibility to develop a new and improved e-filing system (known as eCRIS). The new system which was launched in January 2008 and affords users a state of the art system that delivers warnings and prompts identifying reporting errors and potential violations of campaign laws, and notifying campaign treasurers that filed reports have been received. The system provides e-mail alerts reminding filers when reports are due and providing the most up-to-date compliance advice from the SEEC. The system allows for uploading data from Excel and campaign management software. We've offered many training sessions to potential users throughout the year. We currently have 414 voluntary users of the system, a testimonial to its user friendly design, and to the support we give our users. To ensure that all committee's can utilize it, we've incorporated a feature which allows the treasurer to designate a third party data entry person to complete the filing. 54% of CEP candidate committees filed on eCRIS.

Paper filings contain many more errors, and subject filers to penalties for noncompliance. To ensure that eCRIS users are not dissuaded from using the system, we have attempted to data enter the paper filings. This will achieve a database that is fully and completely searchable, sortable and downloadable. This costs us approximately \$150,000 per year. Disclosure is meaningless if the information is not readily accessible, searchable, sortable and capable of being understood. Connecticut's campaign funding will not be fully transparent, and our ranking will never be near the top until the threshold for mandatory use of the system is lowered substantially and applicable to most candidates and other committees. Thus requiring most filers to use our state of the art system will not only make CT the leader in campaign disclosure, it will achieve a cost savings and a greener environment. It will also speed up reviews of CEP grant applications, and again, save money.

Senate Bill 1107 requires all participating candidates to electronically file as well as those nonparticipating candidates filing with the SEEC who raise or spend at least \$5,000. The bill also requires state party committees and legislative caucus and leadership committees to e-file, and other PACs and party committees which have a balance as of December 31, 2009 of \$5000 or have raised that amount during an ever year. We have some suggested language changes that I've attached to my testimony.

Thank you for your consideration of the Commission's views on this bill.

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Proposed Summary of Changes  
Senate Bill 1107  
March 13, 2009

- (1) Restore the term “software” for programs created by vendors. We don’t want vendors creating web-based programs. Rather, programs created by vendors may only be used for electronic submission to the SEEC when it is done in a standard reporting format prescribed by the SEEC for upload into the SEEC’s web-based program;
- (2) We should eliminate 9-675(b)(1) participating candidates are covered in (2). Recommendation is to stay with the threshold set forth in 9-675(b)(2), renumbering it to 9-675(b)(1).
- (3) Change 9-675(b)(4) from “any other town committee or political committee registered with the commission that (i) has a balance on hand of five thousand dollars or more as of the April 10, 2010, filing under section 9-608 or the April 10th report of any even year thereafter...” to “*any other town committee or political committee registered with the commission that (i) has a balance on hand of five thousand dollars or more as of the last day of the month preceding the statement required to be filed in the month of April ~~the month the April 10, 2010, filing under section 9-608 or the April 10th report of any even year thereafter in any regular state election...~~”*
- (4) Change 9-675(b)(4) from “any other town committee or political committee registered with the commission that ... or (ii) raised or spent five thousand dollars or more in the preceding even year “ to (ii) raised or spent five thousand dollars or more in the preceding even-year regular state election“
- (5) Change 9-675(b)(2) to restore the term “software” by changing “Each such campaign treasurer or individual shall use either... or (2) another [software] web-based program which provides for the standard reporting format, and complies with the specifications, which are prescribed by the commission under subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section, for all such statements. The commission shall accept any statement that uses such web-based program or any such [software] web-based program.” to (2) another software program which provides for the standard reporting format, and complies with the specifications, which are prescribed by the commission under subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section, for all such statements. The commission shall accept any statement that uses any such software program.”
- (6) Change 9-675(c)(2) from “the campaign treasurer of any political committee or party committee that does not have a balance on hand of five thousand dollars or more at any time after December 31, 2009 “to )(2) “from the campaign treasurer of any political committee or party committee that does not have a balance on hand of five thousand dollars or more at any time after December 31, 2009 as of the last day of the month preceding the statement required to be filed in the month of April under section 9-608...”
- (7) Change 9-675(c)(2)(B) from “ [another} a [software] web-based program which provides for the standard reporting format, and complies with the specifications, which are prescribed by the commission under subdivision (2) ...” to “ [another} a software ~~web-based~~ program which provides for the standard reporting format, and complies with the specifications, which are prescribed by the commission under subdivision (2) ...”