

*2009 Program Report Card
Citizen's Election Program*

I. Program Name

Citizens' Election Program (State Elections Enforcement Commission)

II. Quality of Life Results to Which Program Contributes

- Connecticut citizens benefit from the Citizens' Election Program (CEP) because it reduces the influence as well as the appearance of influence of special interests and wealthy donors to candidates for General Assembly and statewide offices and provides the public with complete, timely and easily accessible campaign finance disclosure and transparency.
- The Citizens' Election Program improves the quality of life for Connecticut candidates for General Assembly and statewide offices by: providing candidates without access to personal wealth or connections to special interests a meaningful opportunity to run for office; and offering intensive one-on-one assistance to ensure that candidates understand and successfully follow Program rules.

III. Program's Contribution to Results

The voluntary Citizens' Election Program offers Connecticut residents the opportunity to run for public office by providing public funding to candidates for State Representative, State Senator and in 2010 statewide offices. Participating candidates raise small dollar individual contributions in order to receive public campaign funds and are accountable to their constituents rather than to special interests. The elimination of special interest money leads to improvement of public trust in government. Participating candidates report spending less time on fundraising and more time discussing issues of concern with the public. Additionally, electronic filing has increased in popularity among campaigns. The State Elections Enforcement Commission's free, easily searchable online campaign finance reporting system (eCRIS) has provided the public with meaningful and timely disclosure of campaign receipts and expenditures since January 2008.

IV. Partners

External Partners and their Roles

The Connecticut General Assembly:

- Severing the provisions of C.G.S. sec. 9-717 to ensure that the CEP remains in existence, ensuring that the CEP is sufficiently funded, and providing revisions to improve the operation of the Program, serving Connecticut's population.

The Office of the Attorney General:

- Represents SEEC in litigation and appeals, including *Green Party v. Garfield*, now on appeal, which challenges the constitutionality of certain aspects of the Citizens' Election Program.

The Office of the State Treasurer:

- Maintains the Citizens' Election Fund, funded by escheats of unclaimed property to the State.

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The Office of the State Comptroller, the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services and the Connecticut Department of Information Technology:

- Jointly managing the CORE-CT system which transmits grant funds electronically to committees whose grant applications are approved.

The Office of the Secretary of the State:

- Providing timely ballot status updates and statistics.

Town Clerks and the Connecticut Town Clerks Association:

- Reviewing petitions for candidacy.

Independent Academic and Nonprofit Good Government Organizations:

Common Cause, the Connecticut Citizen Action Group, the League of Women Voters, the Campaign Finance Institute, the Brennan Center:

- Publicizing aspects of the CEP, researching data on the effects of public campaign financing, assisting SEEC in legal challenges to the CEP

Major and Minor party state central and town committees:

- Disseminating information about the CEP to party members and potential candidates.

Internal Partners and Their Roles:

Legal Compliance Unit

- Receives legal inquiries and provides compliance advice, oversees the production and editing of committee training material and provides legal guidance at training sessions.

Candidate Services Unit

- Assigns an Elections Officer liaison to each committee who responds to initial questions, provides procedural advice, notifies candidates about deadlines, drafts training materials and conducts training sessions.

Fiscal and Grant Payments Unit

- Assists with CORE-CT functions, transmits approved grant funds, and publishes an annual status report on the Citizens' Election Fund.

Campaign Disclosure & Audit Unit

- Publishes reporting calendars, receives and tracks committee registrations and disclosure statements, reviews disclosure statements, qualifying contribution certification documents, and grant applications and conducts audits.

Information Technology Unit

- Maintains eCRIS and eCRIS Document Search, provides training, advice and assistance to eCRIS users.

Legal Enforcement Unit

- Investigates and enforces election and campaign finance law including statutes concerning the Citizens' Election Program.

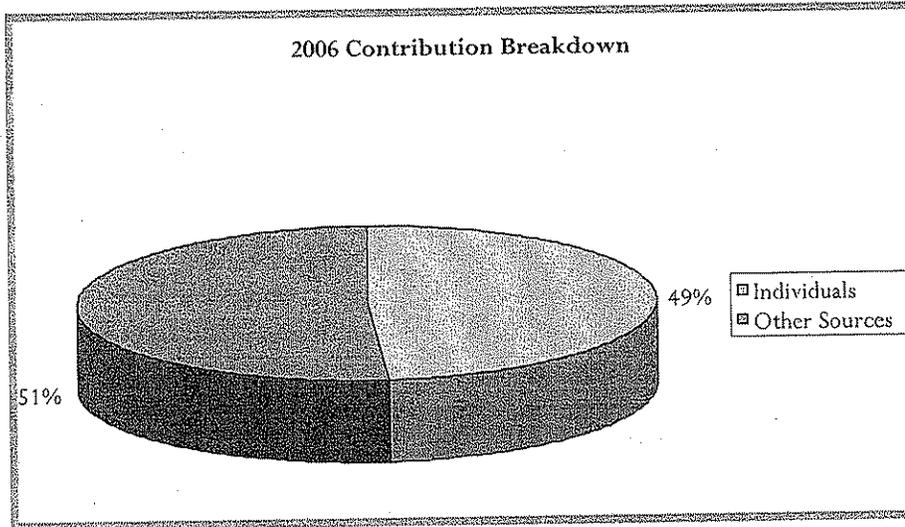
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V. "Headline" Performance Measures

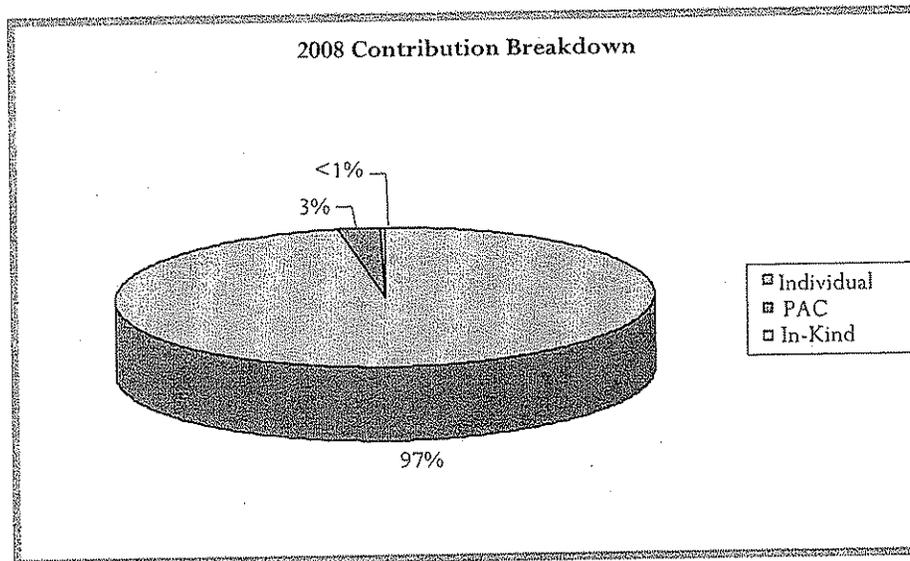
Performance Measure 1.

REDUCTION OF SPECIAL INTEREST MONEY IN THE 2008 CAMPAIGNS

In 2006, less than half of the contributions made to political candidates came from individuals, and nearly half of the \$9.3 million raised by candidates came from lobbyists, political committees (PACs) and entities.



In the 2008 legislative elections, an extraordinary 97% of contributions came from individuals. With the bulk of these contributions meeting the criteria of as qualifying contributions for candidates participating in the Citizens' Election Program, those contributions did not exceed \$100.



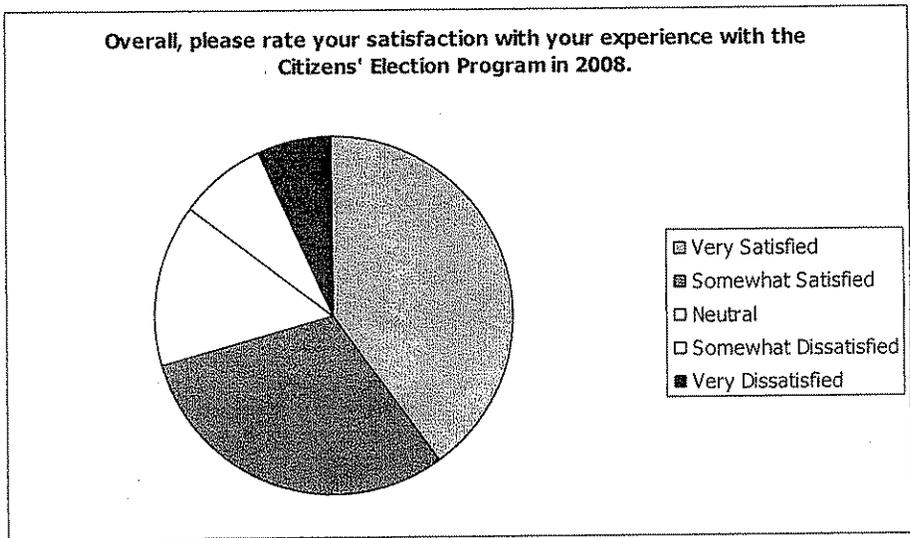
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Performance Measure 2.

CANDIDATE SATISFACTION:
HOW WELL IS THE CEP DELIVERING SERVICES TO CANDIDATES?

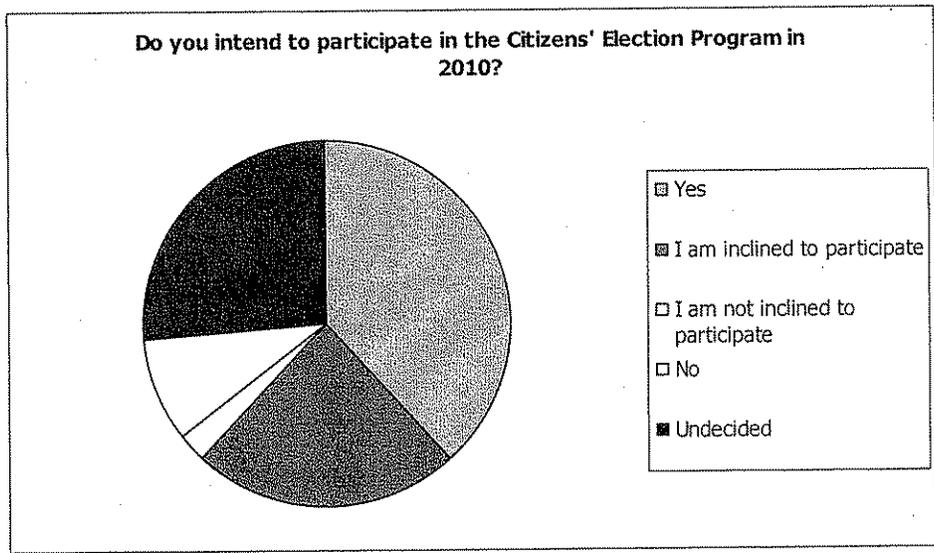
The Candidate Services Unit of the SEEC conducted an online survey in May and June of 2009 of all 2008 participating candidates, treasurers and deputy treasurers of participating candidate committees.

Overall, please rate your satisfaction with your experience with the Citizens' Election Program in 2008. 70% of candidates responding to the survey were Satisfied with their experience, with 40% Very Satisfied.



Do you intend to participate in the Citizens' Election Program in 2010?

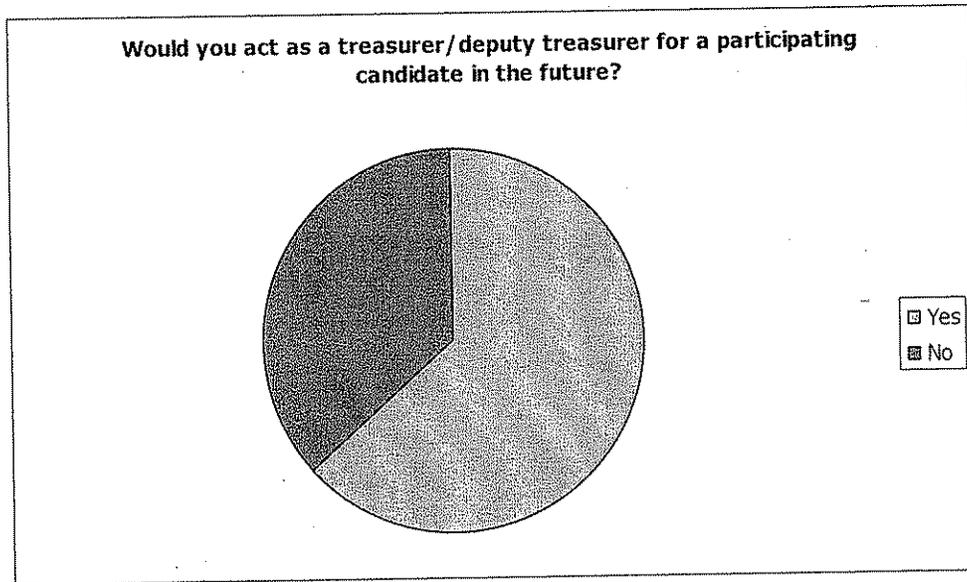
Nearly 62% of candidate survey respondents said yes, or that they were inclined to participate in the CEP. 26% were undecided.



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Treasurers: Please rate your satisfaction with your experience with the Citizens' Election Program in 2008. Slightly more than 75% of treasurers responding were Satisfied; while almost 43% indicated Very Satisfied.

Overall, Satisfaction and likelihood of acting as a Treasurer for a participating candidate in the future. 63% of responding treasurers would act in that capacity for a participating candidate in the future.



Performance Measure 3.

INCREASED CAMPAIGN FINANCE DISCLOSURE - TRANSPARENCY

Since the inception of SEEC's electronic campaign reporting information system (eCRIS) in January of 2008, the number of committees filing via eCRIS has increased.

***ELECTRONIC VS. PAPER CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTING:
COMPARISON OF COMMITTEES USING ECRIS
IN JANUARY 2008 AND JANUARY 2009***

Type of Committee	# filing via eCRIS January 2008	Percent of total filings January 2008	# filing by paper, January 2008	As % of total filings, January 2008	# filing via eCRIS January 2009	Percent of total filings, January 2009	# filing by paper January 2009	Percent of total filings January 2009
Candidate	1	3.7%	26	96.3%	147	62%	90	38%
PAC	3	.06%	488	99.38%	76	17.35%	362	82.65%
Party	1	.03%	361	99.7%	108	30.3%	249	69.7%

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VI. Story Behind the Baseline

Performance Measure 1.

REDUCTION OF SPECIAL INTEREST MONEY IN THE 2008 CAMPAIGNS

Data Sources

Commission staff obtained data on the sources and amounts of contributions to candidates for General Assembly in 2006 and 2008 from an analysis of every campaign finance disclosure statement for candidate committees in those races.

Causes and Forces at Work Accounting for Current Performance

The high level of participation (almost 75% of all candidates for General Assembly in 2008 participated in the CEP) was a factor in reducing the number and amount of contributions received from special interest sources and wealthy individuals.

Data Analysis and How it May Trend in 2010

If participation in the CEP remains at a high level in 2010, there will be continued significant reductions in candidates' reliance on financing from special interest sources. Candidate Services Unit staff have analyzed campaign finance disclosure statements of candidate and exploratory committees for 2010 and most candidates are raising qualifying contributions. Many current candidates and exploring candidates have expressed an intention to participate in the Citizens' Election Program.

Weakness in Data

Data on the effects of the CEP is currently available for a single election year, the General Assembly in 2008. Going forward, the Commission will have electronic data on sources and amounts of contributions for additional election cycles, enabling further comparisons.

Performance Measure 2.

**CANDIDATE SATISFACTION:
HOW WELL IS THE CEP DELIVERING SERVICES TO CANDIDATES?**

Methodology of Participating Candidate and Treasurer Surveys

In May 2009 the Candidate Services Unit developed a customer service survey of participants in the 2008 Citizens' Election Program. The Elections Officers conducted two separate on-line surveys using Survey Monkey, a web site with tools to assist with survey design, distribution, and data analysis. The candidate survey consisted of 25 open and closed end questions focused on measuring the Commission's effectiveness in administering the Program, customer satisfaction, and respondents' suggestions for improvement and was emailed to **all** participating candidates, regardless of whether the candidate had applied for or received a grant. The treasurer

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and deputy treasurer survey was emailed to treasurers and deputy treasurers for all participating candidates. The treasurer survey consisted of 37 questions which focused more on the procedural steps of the Program, because treasurers were most likely to be involved as the point of contact for a committee. Both response rates exceeded the 30% benchmark for surveys conducted online.

Causes and Forces at Work Accounting for Current Performance:

Participating candidates' level of satisfaction in 2008 is in part attributable to intensive efforts on the part of Commission staff in the Candidate Services, Legal Compliance and Campaign Disclosure and Audit Units.

85% of participating candidates and 90% of treasurers responding to the survey agreed that having an Elections Officer (Candidate Services Liaison) assigned to their committees was a valuable resource. Each Elections Officer was assigned approximately 125 candidates, and provided information and updates regarding training, disclosure deadlines, and changes to the law, as well as responding to inquiries and assisting campaigns at the time of grant application. Overall, Candidate Service Unit staff made approximately 11,775 telephone, email, mail and in-person contacts with campaigns in 2008.

Just over half of candidates and treasurers responding to the survey said that they had contacted the Legal Compliance Unit for information and advice on legal questions regarding the CEP. The Compliance Unit's staff of six attorneys answered thousands of queries from June 2008 through December 2008, and monitored the content of all responses to ensure clarity and consistency of interpretation.

All grant applications in 2008 were determined within the statutory deadline of four business days by the Campaign Disclosure and Audit Unit, which conducted 323 grant application reviews, including analyses to establish the number of qualifying contributions each candidate had raised. On average, each Accounts Examiner reviewed 40 grant applications.

Improvement in Data Collection

Commission staff will conduct a survey of participating candidates and treasurers in 2010, and will compare the results from that survey to the 2008 responses to ascertain candidate satisfaction within areas of service delivery, as well as identify areas in which service delivery may be improved.

FORECAST:

Candidates and candidate committee officers, staff and volunteers who receive practical, hands-on training geared to their questions and needs, as well as frequent contact and open dialogue with an assigned Candidate Services Liaison, are more likely to express satisfaction with the CEP and are less likely to violate campaign finance law and/or CEP regulations. While the satisfaction level among candidates and treasurers who responded to the survey is already high, satisfaction will grow as the Program develops.

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Performance Measure 3.

INCREASED CAMPAIGN FINANCE DISCLOSURE - TRANSPARENCY

Data Analysis

When expressed as a percentage of the total number of filings, the percentage of candidate committees voluntarily filing via eCRIS increased 58.3% between January 2008 and January 2009. The increase in electronic filing by candidate committees outstripped the percentage of increase in the same period by party committees (17.29% increase) and political committees (30.27% increase).

As more committees file electronically, their campaign finance data will be rapidly available for public viewing, resulting in greater transparency.

How We Got to Where We Are

Electronic Filing

In 2000, certain party committees, political committees, candidate and exploratory committees filed statutorily required campaign finance disclosure statements with the Connecticut Secretary of the State. In that year, the Secretary of the State instituted the state's first electronic reporting system, named CFIS (Campaign Finance Information System). Electronic reporting was required for candidates for statewide office, but was voluntary for other committees.

Public Act 05-5 (October 25 Special Session) made the State Elections Enforcement Commission the filing repository for committees formerly required to report campaign finances to the Secretary of the State. The Commission replaced CFIS with a new Electronic Campaign Reporting Information System (eCRIS), which was launched in January 2008.

Causes and Forces at Work Accounting for Current Performance

Generally, participating candidates and treasurers in 2008 report a high level of satisfaction with electronic filing and with SEEC's administration of the eCRIS system. 69% of participating candidates who responded to the survey would use eCRIS in the future; 71% of responding treasurers used eCRIS in 2008. This level of satisfaction is one of the factors in the increasing numbers of candidate committees utilizing eCRIS.

Because each contribution must be itemized in order to be counted as a qualifying contribution, participating candidates are particularly likely to use eCRIS because it eases the task of itemization. In addition, eCRIS has "pop-up" warnings and information regarding potential reporting violations.

FORECAST:

The number of committees filing electronically (including 2010 candidate and exploratory committees) will continue to increase. If the legislature passes mandatory e-filing once a

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committee has reaches \$5,000 in receipts or expenditures (as suggested by the SEEC) use of eCRIS will grow exponentially.

Improvements to Data

The Commission's Information Technology has greatly increased public accessibility to campaign finance disclosure data. eCRIS Document Search allows the public to search, browse and download information from campaign finance reports. In pursuit of SEEC's mission to make information specific to political activities accessible in a user friendly manner to the public, eCRIS Search offers five distinct multi-field search options: (1) Document/Filing Search, (2) Committee Search, (3) Disbursement Search, (4) Receipts Search, and (5) Search on Summary Totals. Each option has been carefully designed to cater to the needs of its specific public audience.

VII. Proposed Actions to Turn the Curve

Performance Measure 1.

REDUCTION OF SPECIAL INTEREST MONEY IN THE 2008 CAMPAIGNS

The Commission will work with the legislature by providing research and data to ensure that the CEP remains in existence and is sufficiently funded. The Commission will also work with the Attorney General on the pending appeal in the constitutional challenge to certain aspects of the CEP.

In addition, the Commission has gathered data from 2006 and 2008 regarding sources of contributions and will compare this carefully to 2010 data regarding the role of special interest money in elections.

Proposed Action – Cost:

Independent Survey of Public Opinion Regarding the Citizens' Election Program

According to preliminary research by Commission staff, the cost of hiring an independent polling firm to identify a statistically suitable cross section of the Connecticut public of 400-600 respondents, assist in drafting questions and to conduct a 10 question public opinion poll for SEEC would cost between \$8,000-\$15,200.

Proposed Action – Overall Cost Savings:

Most of the independent polling firms contacted said that conducting such public opinion polls for multiple agencies would result in substantial cost savings and that the poll questions could be tailored to the needs of each agency.

RBA Investigate funding for multiple agency public opinion polls, as suggested at the RBA Roundtable in the summer of 2009.

