

Dan Malloy for CT

To Chair and Members of the Committee on Government Administration and Elections

**Testimony re the Citizens' Election Program
February 22nd, 2010**

Thank you for allowing us to present testimony in favor of preserving the Citizens' Election Program which is an important and vibrant part of our election process. Your bills 5021 and 5022 and efforts in this regard are critical steps that are needed to maintain the integrity of Connecticut's election laws for the upcoming 2010 election and going forward into the future.

We represent not only Mr. Malloy who is a strong supporter of public campaign financing but also the many people who support his campaign. We also speak from our experience of working with the current system and the State Election Enforcement Commission for over a year, and we commend their professionalism and their competence. We have learned a great deal over this year, and we have suggestions that might assist you in moving forward on hopefully protecting and strengthening the public financing of political campaigns.

There are three areas that we would like to briefly comment on.

I Qualification Levels-Flexibility and Accessibility

A great deal of attention and focus has been put on qualification levels required in order to participate in the Citizens' Election Fund. We recognize that there needs to be levels set that require thresholds that are not easily attainable in order to require possible candidates to "earn" their qualifications. If the levels are too low and almost anyone could attain the required levels, the Citizens' Election Fund could easily be bankrupted.

On the other hand, the levels cannot be set at levels that are so difficult to attain that practically no one can achieve them. This would result in a public financing system that would benefit only a very small number. Finding the right level and methodology between too easily attainable and almost impossible to attain is of course a difficult challenge. We would hope that a fair methodology can be arrived at to allow minor and major party candidates to qualify. We suggest the following concepts be considered at least for this election cycle.

- 1 *Lower threshold for qualification from \$250,000 to \$200,000.*
- 2 *Allowing candidates to count as qualified contributions the first \$100 of all contributions.*
- 3 *Extend deadline to June 30th, 2010 for qualifying for initial grants.*
- 4 *For future election cycles increasing the \$100 level for qualifying contributions to at least \$500.*

II Supplemental Grants-Making Grants Attainable and Similar to Initial Grants

The availability of additional grants in either a primary or general election is an important part of the Citizens' Election Program and needs to be preserved in any amendments that are made to the statute. Both 5021 and 5022 fortunately have sections that will continue the granting of supplemental grants to candidates who qualify for them to receive these grants. It will be important to establish attainable criteria for candidates to qualify for these grants and at present it is unclear what those criteria will be in 5021. In 5022 the concept to match what candidates are able to raise on their own up to a maximum of \$625,000 in a primary and \$1,500,000 in the general election is an interesting concept but here again the limiting of this match to only qualified contributions of \$100 or less is too restrictive and onerous particularly at this late date. The dollar for dollar match differs significantly from the spirit of present legislation which allows candidates who raise \$250,000 to be able to receive as much as \$4,250,000 in initial grants. We suggest the following be considered.

- 1 *Candidates who attain a level of up to \$250,000 be entitled to the amounts that are in the present legislation; \$1,250,000 in the primary and \$3,000,000 in the general election. This would be the Supplemental Grant Requirement (SGR).*

- 2 *Candidates would be able to (perhaps for 2010 only) be able to reach the SGR by using the portion of their contributions that exceed \$100 or raising the funds with a limit of \$1,000 per contributor. Combinations of both would be allowed to reach the \$250,000 level.*
- 3 *Of the total of SGR approximately 30% or \$75,000 would be required in order to qualify for the primary and the additional \$175,000 required for the general election.*
- 4 *Candidates who reach over 50% of the SGR would be entitled to pro-rata share of supplemental grants.*
- 5 *Deadlines to qualify for the supplemental grant for the primary be extended to June 30, 2010 and to September 15th, 2010 for the general election.*

III Deadlines-Time Constraints in 2010

As we all know this is the first year that Campaign Finance Reform has been in place on a state-wide level. This has been enormously complicated by the court case and the uncertainty surrounding the status of the Citizens' Election Fund and time has become an important factor. We recommend the following.

Consideration should therefore be given to a provision that would state that the deadlines suggested above or any related deadlines be the later of those dates or 90 days from the date the final bill becomes effective.

We thank the General Assembly for allowing us to submit our thoughts and ideas. Having worked with the current legislation for over one year we have learned a great deal and are more than willing to assist in any way that we can to assure the voters of Connecticut that the Citizens' Election Fund and the entire program continues and thrives.

Len Miller
Treasurer
Dan Malloy for CT

