



**Testimony of Cheri Quickmire
Before the Appropriations Committee General Government A
February 8, 2010**

Good evening. My name is Cheri Quickmire and I am the Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut. Common Cause is one of the organizations who worked to urge the General Assembly and the Governor to pass the Citizens' Election Program (CEP) in 2005, as well as important fixes to that law in 2006 and 2007.

Common Cause in Connecticut is a nonpartisan, nonprofit citizen lobby that works to improve the way Connecticut's government operates. Common Cause has more than 400,000 members around the country and 36 state chapters. We have approximately 7500 members and activists in Connecticut.

I appreciate the hard work of the Appropriations committee and the General Assembly as you seek to deal with the financial challenges that we face in Connecticut today. I am here tonight to say that, despite a dour economic outlook, our state is not too broke to be clean.

The inaugural year of the CEP was a tremendous success. A success watched around the country. Because of your hard work and the work of your colleagues the Citizens' Election Program is a model for good government reform in the nation. 73 percent of all candidates in 2008 ran under the Citizens' Election Program. 78 percent of those elected to serve in the 2009-2010 General Assembly are Citizens' Elections officials. 97 percent of all contributions in the 2008 election came from individuals and 102 women ran for seats in the General Assembly, the largest number of female candidates in a decade.

Additional Cuts will Cripple Citizens' Election Program

Over the past 14 months the CEP has been cut by \$39 million. Any additional cuts make it challenging to have the funds we need to run a robust program in 2010 and it calls into question whether we have the resources to run a program in 2012. The statewide and legislative races in 2014 will be all but impossible to fund with the resources that could be accrued by then. Common Cause urges you to reject any proposals to cut the Citizens' Election Program.

On January 1st the SEEC reported on the sufficiency of the Citizens' Election Fund. (Projected Levels of Candidate Participation and Public Grant Distribution for the 2010 Citizens' Election Program & The Sufficiency of the Citizens' Election Program December 28, 2009). The report is available on the SEEC website.

Projecting various scenarios – looking at past election trends and what is known now about the 2010 elections at the time of the report – they estimate expectations on the fund for the coming election. I will only mention two of the potential scenarios.

In scenario one, the 2010 Statewide Projections for the Primary they estimate a total of five qualifying primary candidates for governor. This estimates (1) four qualifying primary candidates for Lieutenant Governor; (2) six qualifying primary candidates for the Constitutional offices of State Treasurer, State Comptroller and Attorney General. At current Primary Grant amounts this estimate totals: \$10,000,000. At the time SEEC made this projection the Attorney General race was not open. We could very likely have a primary on both the Republican and Democrat side for that race.

This does not include consideration for a self-funded, or high spending non-participating candidate in a primary contest. If the high spending candidate raises or spends beyond the expenditure limit for a participating candidate, the SEEC must be prepared to distribute additional/supplemental grants to every participating candidate in that primary. Assuming the same number of qualifying candidates with an injection of personal wealth in excess of \$1.25 million during the primary could result in an additional \$2.5 million being distributed. The result is a total cost for 2010 statewide primaries of \$11.25 million.

2010 Statewide Projections for the General Elections total \$15, 000,000 (under the assumptions above detailed under Statewide Primaries). In the case of campaigns involving high spending, non-participating candidates, SEEC estimates additional “matching fund” payments to match independent expenditures targeting participating candidates for a total of grants and supplemental payments of \$23,000,000.

According to the SEEC, and based on cuts to the fund over the past 14 months, the Citizens' Election fund balance is currently at \$43 million – or probably less if special election costs are factored in under which scenario, Elections Enforcement estimates it will need \$52 million to run the program in 2010. Common Cause believes the costs for 2010 races could be higher than \$52 million because the assumptions SEEC makes to arrive at \$52 million do not assume as much competition and primaries as we would assume and it may underestimate the amount of independent expenditures for statewide races.

If we do not have enough money to run the program in 2010, then the SEEC will need to prorate grant amounts and candidates can raise large amounts of money from private sources, which completely undermines the Program's goals. In addition, we would have negative balances in 2010 and 2011, it will be very difficult to make up the ground we need to run legislative races in 2012 and impossible to make up the difference 2014.

As a reminder, the following acts have swept the Citizens' Election Fund:

- Public Act 08-1 the General Assembly transferred \$5,000,000 from the CEF
- Public Act 09-1 the General Assembly transferred \$7,500,000 from the CEF
- Public Act 09-2 the General Assembly transferred \$1,500,000 from the CEF
- Public Act 09-3 the General Assembly transferred \$25,000,000 from the CEF,

\$18,000,000 was transferred mid November 2009 and an additional sweep of \$7,000,000 will be made in FY 11.

At this point I am skeptical that we would be left with a full allotment in 2012 but if the CEF did receive a full allotment, the fund would have \$10.3 million for grants for legislative races in 2012 – *when a budget passes in the spring of 2012*. **This will be extremely destabilizing to candidates and they may choose to forgo participation in the program because they won't know if it will have any revenue – let alone sufficient revenue for the program.** I am not sure whether \$10 million will be enough money to cover all races in 2012. Experience in other states that have public financing shows that participation increases over the years that a program is in effect.

If full allotments are available for 2013 and 2014, with the same kind of costs listed above, \$20 million would be available for statewide and General Assembly races in 2014. That will not adequately fund this important program. We understand that Connecticut faces a budget crisis. We also understand that every program needs to be reviewed and that cuts and pain must be shared. The Citizens' Election program has already been cut by \$39 million over the past fourteen months. We believe further cuts will discourage participation in the program and ultimately are dangerous to the program

We applaud the efforts of the Appropriations committee and leadership to hold firm on protecting this important good government reform. This landmark program brought Connecticut a long way from "Corrupticut" and we cannot go back.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

