

Charlotte Koskoff 8 River Edge Ct. Plainville, Connecticut 06062

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, Senator Debicella, Representative Miner and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on the Governor's March 1, 2010 Deficit Mitigation Plan.

My name is Charlotte Koskoff. I do not represent any organization or group but speak as an individual citizen wanting to see that Connecticut's landmark campaign finance reform system is preserved. Like many others, I am concerned about the health of our democracy and troubled by the inordinate influence of special interests on government. I bring the perspective of someone who has had actual fund-raising experience as a candidate for office in a large district.

I am writing to urge the Appropriations Committee and the Legislature to fund the Citizens Election Program at levels that permit it to fulfill its mission. It is doubtful that the program can remain viable if it has to sustain the cuts proposed in the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan. I urge you to reject the Governor's proposed cuts to the CEP.

The Citizens Election Program has the potential to be a powerful deterrent to corruption in government and a significant force for strengthening our electoral processes. The court rulings that have declared sections unconstitutional, even if upheld on appeal, present challenges that can be addressed without compromising the basic strength of the model. Those constitutional infirmities can be healed, leaving a voluntary public funding program capable of doing much good work. It is up to your committee to see that the Citizens Election Program is not starved to death by funding cuts that take away the resources it needs to do its work.

Make no mistake, if the Citizens Election Program is starved to death by budget cuts that render it unable to provide adequate substitute funding for campaigns, we will be back to a situation of special interest dominance of campaign funding and consequent special influence in government. This is particularly true for the Governor's race and other contested statewide races. The disturbing reality is that the only practical alternatives to voluntary public funding in the Governor's race and other hotly contested statewide races are sponsorship by special interests or personal wealth.

As your committee and the legislature as a whole struggle to maintain the lifeblood of our state in the face of serious fiscal crisis, we have to acknowledge that part of our situation stems from past imprudent governing caused by corruption. Deterring a continuation of corrupt governance must rank as a necessity and priority in maintaining the lifeblood of Connecticut.

Thank you.  
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