



*Connecticut Chapter
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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 22, 2010

Testimony in favor of efforts to amend and retain public campaign financing and the
Citizens' Election Program.
HB 5021, HB 5022

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club Connecticut Chapter. I am speaking today mainly in that capacity. I am also the campaign treasurer for the 2010 election for a state representative, as I have been for the previous 5 election cycles.

I am here today as an advocate to urge you, in the strongest possible language, to preserve what we already have in place: an effective and appropriate public financing system. I strongly believe the Sierra legislative effort acts in the public interest. A number of legislators have told me that our success in the 2009 session was partially attributable to public financing, even though it had recently completed its first election cycle.

There appears to be a consensus that the most important issues facing the legislature this session are the budget shortfall and jobs. I would add that the third priority should be ensuring the retention of public campaign financing. We thank the Governor for her initial support of the program, and for her continuing efforts to retain it.

We ask you to both fix the defects enumerated in Green Party of Connecticut v. Garfield, and to reduce the costs of the program to address the budget shortfall we are facing. I have confirmed that there are legislators who endorse the principle, but oppose continuing the program simply because they believe we cannot afford it at this time. Sierra believes reducing the size of the grants overall, and reducing payments to unopposed candidates, is warranted. As a treasurer, I wholeheartedly agree. Our campaign returned \$5,000 of the \$25,000 received in 2008. However, the trigger for matching an opponent's excessive spending must be preserved. If we don't, we fear that many candidates will not participate.

The Sierra Club believes that public financing is one of the most effective means of assuring good, honest, effective, appropriate, government which acts in the best interests of the electorate. It reduces the opportunities for special interests to capture the process.

In 1999, the national board, addressing federal elections, declared that public financing will:

- Increase congressional dedication to the long-term best interests of the nation by decreasing congresspeople's obligations to campaign contributors.*
- Shift political power toward voters and volunteers and away from wealthy self-funded candidates and large contributors seeking political favors.*

-Increase public trust in the power of voting and public interest lobbying.

-Improve the quality of candidates for Congress by reducing the role of money in elections.

-Reduce campaign solicitation efforts of congresspeople so they can better serve constituents and their environment.

The Connecticut Chapter issues the following statement about state elections:

The 2008 election cycle provided the first real test of the Citizens' Election Program -- Connecticut's landmark system of public financing of elections. The majority of candidates for the state legislature participated in the program. The Program is now threatened by a 2009 district court ruling that found sections of the law unconstitutional. In addition, the Program is challenged by repeated efforts to raid the Citizens' Election fund that provides grants to candidates. In the past 15 months, more than \$38 million was taken from the fund. There will be attempts in the 2010 session to de-fund the program entirely.

The Sierra Club, which depends on a fair and effective legislature which is accountable only to the electorate to accomplish its mission, declares:

-Public Campaign Financing decreases the possibility of corruption by elected officials

-Public Campaign Financing allows candidates to focus on issues, not fund-raising

-Public Campaign Financing ensures that elections are not dominated by special interest money

-Public Campaign Financing encourages legislators to vote on bills based on their merits rather than the source of campaign contributions

-Public Campaign Financing generates public faith in the political process

-Public Campaign Financing is necessary to enable the legislature to act fairly and appropriately on public interest legislative initiatives

-Public Campaign Financing is necessary to the functioning of a healthy democracy

Therefore, we call on the Governor and every serving legislator and candidate for public office, whether participating in the program or not, to support continued funding for the Citizens' Election Program, and to support any revisions to the program necessary to ensure its continued success and to address any adverse judicial findings.