

**Testimony of Nancy DiNardo, Chairwoman, CT-DSCC  
GA&E Committee Hearing – HB 5022  
Monday, February 22, 2010**

Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, members of the committee - - thank you for having me here today. I want to begin by expressing my support of the Citizens' Election Program, at least in concept. Though we have only used it for one cycle, I believe it has opened opportunity to a number of candidates who would otherwise not have considered seeking public office. Of course, like with any new legislation, there are several areas in which it can be improved.

Over the last several days, I have held conference calls with Town Chairs from across the state because I wanted to get their input on how they feel this program has or has not worked. I think we can all agree that, aside from the candidates themselves, it is our town committees - - that grassroots effort - - that make our elections possible.

I can tell you that, overall, they were very supportive of the program. One of the points that I heard several times over was that this program has relieved candidates of the majority of the often over-burdensome task of fundraising. There were several candidates who sought election during the last cycle that would have otherwise been discouraged - - whether it was because they were considering challenging an incumbent or because they were more interested in talking to people about policy than spending endless hours asking for dollars. It was felt that once the candidates qualified for the grant, they could then focus on talking to voters about issues.

One particular problem that I heard multiple times was the difficulty many campaign treasurers found in the reporting. In fact, several people who served in those roles said they would not do so again. This issue could pose problems in the future when trying to find qualified, and more importantly, willing volunteers to serve in these roles. Of course, we have only used these new rules in one cycle and perhaps it will get easier with time, however, looking at creating a more streamlined process for reporting would be of great benefit.

The one major area of contention has to do with the prohibition of state contractors and lobbyists from contributing to events as well as attending events in their communities. This particular prohibition has had a significant impact on many Committees where longstanding members have not been able to fully participate in Committee activities. Aware of the fact that this issue is in the courts, several town chairs have asked that you consider allowing lobbyists and state contractors to be able to donate and attend fundraising events in the community in which they reside.

I will not reiterate the proposals I made to you the last time I appeared before this committee. But if you need copies of that testimony, I would be happy to provide it to you.

I appreciate your time and again thank you for this opportunity.