



**CGA Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing April 5, 2011
SB 1121 AA Establishing a Task Force to Study the Distribution of State Funds to
Municipalities
Comments Submitted by Katherine Wilson, School Finance Specialist**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to comment today on SB 1121.

We support the bill's stated intent to evaluate the equity, efficiency, and continued viability of the distribution of PILOT, Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan, ECS, and school transportation grants in the belief that review of programs, especially ones like these that cost the state a total of over \$2 billion annually, is always a good idea. We wonder, however, why only these particular grants were included and whether the charge of the task force envisioned in this bill does not overlap with that recently approved by the Education Committee in section 18 of Substitute Bill 6385 AA Implementing the Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education. We also wonder whether the public interest would not be better served by the creation of a body whose responsibility would be the regular, ongoing review of all municipal aid programs, rather than the one-time, limited-scope task force created by this bill.

As to membership, whether of the task force or of an ongoing body, we suggest that it specifically include the chairpersons of the Education Committee and representatives of municipal government and boards of education. In addition, since the group's charge includes scrutiny of the ECS grant which is by far the largest and most complex of the grants to be scrutinized, we would also suggest that it be required to consult with nationally recognized, non-partisan experts in the field of education finance.

We believe that, however constituted, this group's mission should be to render municipalities less dependent on the property tax for revenue and to support a system of public education funding that makes available to each community in the state financial resources sufficient to provide a suitable program of educational experiences for each child. We hope this work will lead to a revised system that –

- is based on the latest and best research regarding the factors that influence the cost of educating children of all backgrounds and needs,
- reflects the relative ability of different communities to finance schools from local resources,
- fully funds through grants to towns 50% of the overall statewide cost of local public elementary and secondary education.

Thank you for allowing us to share our ideas with you today on this important legislation.