



*Connecticut Chapter*  
*645 Farmington Ave.*  
*Hartford, Connecticut 06105*  
[www.connecticut.sierraclub.org](http://www.connecticut.sierraclub.org)  
Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Government Elections and Administration Committee  
March 7, 2011

Testimony In Opposition to  
SB 1009 AA Creating The Office Of Governmental Accountability

With a Comment on  
HB 5980 AAC the Streamlining of Agency Permit and Licensing Processes

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club-Connecticut Chapter, the Political Chair for the Sierra Club-Connecticut Chapter, and a campaign committee treasurer for the past six elections (2000-2010). I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

#### **SB 1009**

I have somewhat of a unique perspective on the interplay between elections and legislation:

-I am a fulltime volunteer Legislative Chair working to get effective legislation which is in the public interest passed

-I am the Political Chair of a 501(c)(4) organization, working to endorse candidates whom we believe will vote well in the public interest

-I am a campaign committee treasurer working to have my candidate, whom I believe effectively and strongly represents the public interest, elected

What serves these interests most effectively is clean, honest, well regulated and especially publically funded elections. The 2005 law which created the Citizens' Election Program (PA 05-5) was an extraordinary step forward for good government. I have been told by numerous legislators that, even after the first complete election cycle of the CEP in 2008, bills which Sierra supported were passed because the influence of special interest lobbyists had been reduced. The 2009 AAC Banning Bisphenol-a In Children's Products And Food Products And Prohibiting Certain Alternative Substances bill, which will protect children from this toxic substance, is a good example.

From all 3 of my perspectives, the SEEC has been a model agency. It has instituted an appropriate set of rules, has communicated clearly and effectively with those involved with elections, and, perhaps most importantly, has served effectively as the guardian of the public's election funds. While I might resent the extensive post-election campaign committee audits I must endure as a treasurer, I can make no case that they are unnecessary or inappropriately conducted.

I've focused on the SEEC, but should point out that each of the agencies at stake here have watchdog roles over each other, which would seriously be compromised. The knowledge and expertise required in each agency differs widely, so opportunities to share professional staff would be minimal. Oversight by the citizen boards of commissioners has proven effective, and should be continued. Installing a political appointee, be it an executive director, administrator, or commissioner, with oversight control is not in the public interest.

I am not convinced that the Governor's proposal to combine these five watchdog agencies, working under the authority of a political appointee, will preserve their integrity. Perhaps common back office resources will save a very small amount of money. Combining these agencies may help the Governor achieve his promised reduction in the number of funded agencies. However, appointment of someone exercising political oversight, and leaving the governor free to meddle with the budget of the combined agencies, is not a prescription for good government. While the details of the merger have been obviously carefully thought out, the implications have not. Yes, I credit the Governor with the best of intentions in his drive to balance the budget and move beyond the stifling and suffocating "Land of Steady Habits" mentality. I've never stopped at "trust me", and don't think this is a good place to stop here either.

Efforts by our two previous governors to dismantle these agencies were appropriately stymied. Save the few dollars possible by merging back office functions, but ensure these critical watchdog agencies retain their independence free from political influence.

We refer you to the excellent testimony today of Karen Hobert Flynn of Common Cause, to which we fully subscribe.

## **HB 5980**

I wish to point out that the DEP, which has withstood considerable criticism over its permitting functions recently, has done exactly what this bill proposes. Through a LEAN process begun several years ago, the permitting process has been streamlined and permitting times cut substantially. This in spite of an agency which receives less than one-half of one percent of the state budget, and which is one of the lowest funded such agencies in the country. Information is available on the agency's website by clicking on the [DEP's LEAN Initiative](#) link on the home page.