

Testimony of Tom Swan
Executive Director, CT Citizen Action Group
March 7, 2011
GAE Committee

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Morin and other members of the GAE Committee My name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG) – a statewide membership organization with over 20,000 member families. I am here today to testify on SB 1009 AA Creating the Office of Governmental Accountability.

To start I want to credit the Governor for putting forward a budget plan that attempts to balance the budget, while recognizing that government plays a vital role. His demand for greater accountability is laudable. We are glad to see that his proposal seems to have the contracting standards Board

CCAG urges you to carefully review SB 1009 particularly how it impacts the so-called watchdog agencies: Elections Enforcement, Ethics, and the Freedom of Information Commission. The legislature carefully reviewed how each of these functioned around the Rowland and Sylvester scandals and made sure that each had a degree of independence that is needed to ensure an accountable and open government. We are worried that as currently drafted SB 1009 would threaten this independence and that some of the consolidated functions are not as much of a natural fit as it may appear. We look forward to working with you and the Governor's office to address these concerns as these proposals are considered.

There are several other bills being considered today or related that I would like to share CCAG's position. These include:

- CCAG is opposed to section 43 of HB 6380, which reduces the contribution to the Citizens Election Program. While we recognize that once again some resources may need to be diverted from the fund, we believe this successful program would not have adequate resources for going forward.
- CCAG also cannot support section 17 of SB 1000 which overturns budget protections for the watchdogs' budgets that were passed in response to Governor Rowland's efforts at retribution.
- CCAG supports SB 44 and/or HJ No. 8 regarding the selection of the Insurance Commissioner.

Thank you for your consideration.