



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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February 8, 2011

Dear Chairpersons Senator Hartley and Representative Dargan, and Members of the Public Safety Committee,

I am State Representative David Baram, and I want to thank you for holding today's Public Hearing on Committee Bill No. 5184, which is the drafted version of my Proposed Bill No. 5184. As you know this Bill amends CGS Section 7-172, by allowing a sponsoring organization to promote a raffle by offering coupons to any person who purchases a raffle ticket.

The reason for my Proposed Bill was to allow sponsoring organizations like veteran associations, religious groups, civic and charitable organizations, volunteer fire departments, and like groups, to offer coupon books as part of the incentive to purchase a raffle ticket. Coupon books often consist of restaurant discount coupons that help induce people to buy a raffle ticket that offers a prize to the winner. In this manner, a contributor feels like they are getting an incentive to purchase the raffle ticket, knowing that just a few people actually win the designated prize.

Sponsoring organizations as the ones referenced above, perform an invaluable community service through the volunteer efforts of their members. It is important that the State of Connecticut not hinder or obstruct such fundraising efforts especially in this historic Recession. Without successful fundraising, sponsoring organizations will not have the funds necessary to provide the programming and community services that they have come to exemplify and embrace. Failure to successfully raise funds, only hurts the people who are the beneficiaries of their social and community services.

The citizens of our State need the continued involvement and participation of our volunteer organizations, non-profits and charities, so they can receive the many social services that government cannot provide. When I and other Legislators were contacted by local religious institutions and non-profits, we were told that the Division of Special Revenue deemed the offer of discount coupons to be a violation of the Bazaar and Raffle Act (CGS Sections 7-170- to 7-186). As a result, sponsoring organizations have been restricted in their fundraising, and the success of their raffles has been substantially diminished.

In the case of the Mandell Jewish Community Center in West Hartford, the Division of Special Revenue wrote a letter on August 12, 2010 saying that its resources were being reallocated, so that even though it might not inspect permitted events, the Special Revenue Division still cautions that each permittee comply (ie no discount coupons).

No sponsoring organization wants to violate the existing statutes. By amending Section 7-172, sponsoring organizations can comply with the law and hold successful fundraising events. I thank the Public Safety Committee for allowing this matter to proceed and hope that you will support Bill 5184 so it can be voted into law.

Respectfully,

David Baram
State Representative