



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee

February 17, 2012 Public Hearing

Comments Submitted by Pat Reilly, Connecticut League of Women Voters, Ethics Specialist

**Comments On:**

SB 35 AAC THE OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS AND REVISIONS TO THE STATE CODES OF ETHICS

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I am Pat Reilly, Ethics Specialist for the League of Women Voters of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 35 AAC THE OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS AND REVISIONS TO THE STATE CODES OF ETHICS.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut, a statewide organization with over 2100 members, believes that the public should have confidence in the integrity of its government. Government officials and employees should be held accountable for carrying out their duties in both an effective and ethically responsible manner. To accomplish these ends, the League supports efforts to reform, strengthen and clarify Connecticut's Code of Ethics for Public Officials, as well as measures to ensure the existence of a strong, independent and effective Office of State Ethics.

The League generally supports the changes contained in SB 35, believing SB 35 provides the means to strengthening Connecticut's Code of Ethics and the effectiveness of the Office of State Ethics, instilling public trust in government, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

The League highlights its support for the following provisions.

- The inclusion of "employer other than the state" in the list of potential conflicts of interests under the Code of Ethics for Public Officials. (C.G.S. §1-85,1-86a ,94h) Public officials and state employees must be prohibited from using their positions to financially benefit their other employers if the public is to have confidence in the integrity of its government.
- The redefinition of lobbyist registration and reporting requirements by those who lobby within the scope of employment. (C.G.S. §1-94(b),(c), 1-96) Disclosure benefits legislation, legislators, candidates for public office, the public and lobbyists.
- The explicit subjugation of board members of the State Health Insurance Exchange to the Code of Ethics. (C.G.S §38a-1081(c)) The board loses all credibility if allowed to exist outside the scope of the Code of Ethics.

- The provision that lobbyists report expenditures for the benefit of candidates for public office. (C.G.S §1-96 ) With the public increasingly concerned about the role of special interest money in campaigns, providing transparency in campaign contributions is an important measure to help instill confidence in the system.
- The requirement that prospective members of the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board certify that they are aware of the special restrictions of the code of ethics that would apply to them. (C.G.S §1-80) Such awareness is crucial to the effective functioning and governance of the CEAB.

Under (C.G.S §1-85 ) a public official who has a substantial conflict may not take official action on the related matter. However, under SB 35, if the conflict concerns a direct monetary gain or loss for the official's other employer, the official may request a waiver of recusal. The League opposes this exemption, believing that is the very type of situation that should preclude participation. If this provision is passed, a timeframe for the waiver request should be included.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

League of Women Voters of Connecticut · 1890 Dixwell Avenue Hamden, CT 06514 · 203/288-7996