



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
IN OPPOSITION TO GOVERNOR'S HB NOS. 6353 & 6354**

March 22, 2013

*Statement of Joan Jenkins, Vice Chairman
State Elections Enforcement Commission*

As a lifelong resident of Connecticut, who remains committed to fair, transparent, and progressive government, I am deeply disturbed by Gov. Malloy's plan to reduce the effectiveness of the state's watchdog agencies by consolidating key portions of their staff into the Office of Government Accountability in the name of unrealized and undefined savings.

Much of my professional life has been spent working with these watchdog agencies to ensure that Connecticut's citizens receive the honest and responsive government that they expect and deserve. In addition to my 10 years on the State Elections Enforcement Commission, I have also served on the State Ethics Commission, as well as other commissions and boards. Employees at these watchdog agencies work tirelessly to enforce the laws that the General Assembly has put in place to battle actual corruption and to remove the appearance of corruption from state government. I can attest to the countless hours that staff, other commissioners and elected officials have put into developing and supporting a system that is independent, transparent, honest and free from political pressure and influence.

Consolidating vital staff at the watchdog agencies, including SEEC, into an expanded Office of Governmental Accountability, under the control of the executive branch, would nullify much of the work that we have accomplished in the last decade. Without the IT, legal, and fiscal staff that the governor intends to carve off for OGA, the Citizens' Election Program, which opened the way to public office for many without access to private money, would face serious difficulties, and its continued operation and viability would be in jeopardy. As I said when I testified on a similar plan in 2011, this plan has all the trappings of putting the fox back in charge of the henhouse.

The plans outlined in the two bills before you today represent Governor Malloy's second attempt to consolidate power over the watchdog agencies under an individual that he appoints and controls. I remain convinced that this is not an intentional "power grab," but instead the result of an ill-conceived, poorly implemented savings plan. Whatever its genesis, you must reject this plan and protect SEEC and the Citizens' Election Program. Please keep Connecticut on the path that avoids the errors of the past.