

Matthew Streeter
March 22, 2013

**Statement on HB 6353 and HB 6354
Concerning the Office of Governmental Accountability**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 6353 and HB 6354 as they pertain to the Office of Governmental Accountability (OGA).

My name is Matthew Streeter. I am unaffiliated, but served as an elected official for 22 years, including two terms as mayor of South Windsor. I have also been a treasurer for four general assembly races, a probate judge election and a town committee treasurer, so I am well aware of how the State Elections Enforcement Commission works and the good they do to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process. I am currently one of the nine commissioners on the Freedom of Information Commission.

I strongly urge the legislature to protect the autonomy and maintain staffing levels of these oversight commissions currently proposed to be decimated by the Governor's proposals. The efficiency of these organizations will be further compromised should these proposals be passed. If passed, HB 6353 and HB 6354 would tack on to the losses felt by the watchdog agencies as a result of the OGA consolidation.

As a FOI commissioner, I have seen firsthand the workload the commission's staff endeavors with to not only enforce and interpret the Freedom of Information Act, but to engage and educate both the public and public agencies to the value and importance of an efficient, open and transparent government. The further reduction and reassignment of staff could seriously impact the commission's ability to fulfill its statutory obligations and cause delays for resolution of matters concerning public agencies, state departments and our citizens.

It would be a blow to governmental transparency and public confidence to have the legislature ceding control to our governor of both the information the public is entitled to under the Freedom of Information Act and the method for fair elections as administered by the State Elections Enforcement Commission. If anything, the public needs more faith in our government by restoring the autonomy and the budgets to these oversight groups. I urge the legislature to embrace open and transparent governance and maintain the governmental oversight commissions intact for the benefit of the citizens of Connecticut.

Thank you.