

Testimony of Tom Swan

Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

On Various Bills (SB 5 and HB 1146) Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee

March 25, 2013

Good Afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and other members of the GAE Committee, my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG). On behalf of CCAG's over 20,000 member families I want to thank you for holding today's hearing. I will be offering brief comments on two of the bills before you today.

First, CCAG strongly supports SB 5 and urges you to consider changes that would make it as strong as possible and applaud the committee for including many of the aspects from a bill we supported last year that was vetoed by the Governor. We believe the experience of the 2012 election cycle speaks to the importance of such legislation and the need for it to go even further. It is clear that several entities flaunted our existing laws, especially Voters for Good Government, the Roger Sherman Center, and the Great New England Schools group. Their efforts undermined our democracy and we need to act to ensure that secret outside money does not purchase elections as it may have in at least one election in 2012.

There are several components we think are necessary:

- 1) Increased penalties for failure to fully disclose in a timely manner with fines up to 300% of the expenditures and possible criminal prosecution for individuals responsible for the violations.
- 2) Immediate disclosure of campaign spending by corporations and other entities, including all of the sources of funds they use for campaign spending in a manner that does not allow for front groups to help them hide their sources. This will require stronger language.
- 3) Exempt 501 (c) 3 Organizations since they can not engage in partisan activities.
- 4) More clearly define what is considered an expenditure and have all contributions revealed not just in the last 90 days.
- 5) The corporate disclosure piece is very good.

In addition, we need to develop mechanisms that allow for candidates participating in the Citizens Election Program to not be overwhelmed by large independent expenditures to be able to remain competitive.

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These proposed changes will make a good bill even stronger.

In conclusion, I want to voice our opposition to HB 1146 and its attack on Connecticut's fusion voting law. CCAG is not affiliated with any party, but believe that this proposed change will weaken accountability and only serve as an incumbent protection act. Therefore, we urge its rejection.