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Report on Cross Endorsed Candidates in Connecticut State Elections, 2004 – 2012

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Testimony in OPPOSITION to SB1146 AAC Cross-Endorsement

An examination of the election returns from the last five state election cycles (Tables 1 – 3 below) reveals several key points:

1) Use of the cross endorsement voting option has been growing over the last decade. The number of voters opting to vote on a cross endorsed line (for example, voting for the WFP candidate when that party has cross endorsed a major party candidate) in state senate races has increased from a low of 5,829 votes across five districts in 2004 to a high of 59,030 votes across twenty-five districts in 2010. Similarly, use in state house elections has increased from 3,576 votes across fourteen districts in 2004 to 37,232 votes across seventy-three districts in 2012.

This increase in residents opting to cast their votes on cross endorsed ballot lines likely reflects increased awareness of this option, and the larger proportion of races with cross endorsed candidates.

2) The cross endorsement voting option is clearly preferred by a substantial number of voters in Connecticut state elections. Prohibiting cross endorsements would mean that tens of thousands of voters would be denied their preferred electoral option. The results from the 2006 statewide races (Table 3) indicate that more than 25,000 voters were willing to cast their votes on the cross endorsed ballot lines. This amounted to about 2.3 percent of all residents voting in that election.

The proportion of residents willing to cast their votes for cross endorsed candidates was even higher in the legislative elections. In state senate races, the highest levels of support came in the 2008 election, where 59,030 votes were cast on cross endorsed lines across 25 districts. This amounted to 6.6 percent of the votes received by all candidates across all parties in that election. The highest levels of support in state house races came in 2012. In that race, 37,232 votes were cast on cross endorsed lines across seventy-three districts. This amounted to 5.6 percent of the votes received by all candidates across all party lines. The average share of the vote on cross endorsed lines across all elections to both the senate and house is about 4.8 percent.

Further, while most cross endorsements in 2004 to 2010 involved the Working Families Party endorsing Democratic candidates, there were a large number of Republican candidates cross endorsed by the Independent Party in 2012. Thus, candidates from both major parties are attracting cross endorsements.

3) There is evidence in Tables 1 and 2 that the cross endorsement option may be appealing to the more alienated voters. In terms of raw numbers and the percentage of the total vote cast on cross endorsed lines, voters seem to support cross endorsed candidates at the highest levels during the 2008 and 2012 presidential election years. (The presidential election in 2004 is not a good example given the novelty of cross endorsements in that year.) Voter turnout is higher in presidential versus midterm elections, which is generally explained by less engaged voters turning out due the heightened publicity or sense of importance that accompanies a presidential campaign. These less engaged voters may have less interest in politics due to political alienation or frustration with the two major parties. The fact that support for cross endorsed candidates appears to increase in presidential elections seems to indicate that these less engaged voters are choosing to cast their ballots on the cross endorsed lines, rather than voting on the Democratic or Republican lines. While it is not possible to demonstrate this definitively with these data, the trends do suggest that the cross endorsement option is appealing to voters who feel alienated from the political system. Removing this option from the ballot could lead to lower voter turnout, as alienated voters who feel frustrated with both the Democrats and Republicans might choose to show their dissatisfaction by abstaining from the election altogether.

Table 1: Cross Endorsed Candidates in Connecticut State Senate Elections, 2004 – 2012.

	2012	2010	2008	2006	2004
Total Votes Cast on Cross Endorsed Lines	47,852	19,533	59,030	18,443	5,829
Percentage of Districts with Cross Endorsed Candidates	72.2% (26/36)	58.3% (21/36)	69.4% (25/36)	44.4% (16/36)	13.9% (5/36)
Average Votes for Cross Endorsed Candidates	1,841	930	2,361	1,153	1,165
Average Vote Share Received on Cross Endorsed Lines	4.9%	3.6%	6.6%	4.8%	4.2%
Maximum Votes received on Cross Endorsed Lines	3,227	1,930	7336	3463	2,983
Minimum Votes received on Cross Endorsed Lines	612	353	643	445	531

Table 2: Cross Endorsed Candidates in Connecticut State House of Representatives Elections, 2004 – 2012.

	2012	2010	2008	2006	2004
Total Votes Cast on Cross Endorsed Line	37,232	14,503	32,931	10,592	3,576
Percentage of Districts with Cross Endorsed Candidates	48.3% (73/151)	39.7% (60/151)	33.8% (51/151)	27.8% (42/151)	9.3% (14/151)
Average Votes for Cross Endorsed Candidates	510	242	646	252	255
Average Vote Share Received on Cross Endorsed Lines	5.6%	3.7%	7.3%	4.7%	3.4%
Maximum Votes received on Cross Endorsed Lines	3,365	1,023	3,805	1,185	633
Minimum Votes received on Cross Endorsed Lines	83	61	145	39	74

Table 3: Cross Endorsements in 2010 Statewide Elections*

	Total Votes in the Race	Total Votes Cast on Cross Endorsed Lines
Governor/Lt. Governor	1,145,781	26,308 (2.3%)
Attorney General	1,101,794	37,616# (3.4%)
Secretary of State	1,105,203	25,399 (2.3%)
Treasurer	1,106,104	26,524 (2.4%)
Comptroller	1,078,338	24,050 (2.2%)

*There were no cross endorsements of statewide candidates in 2006.

#Two parties cross endorsing in 2010 Attorney General's race.

A note on the methodology:

- 1) In Tables 1-3, the formula for calculating the "Total Votes Cast on Cross Endorsed Lines" = the sum of all votes cast for cross endorsed candidates on the cross endorsing minor party line. In some cases, a race contained more than one cross endorsed candidate. In these instances, the total votes cast on any of the cross endorsed lines was used. This is particularly important in the 2012 election when there were a number of races in which the Democratic candidate was cross endorsed by the Working Families Party and the Republican candidate was cross endorsed by the Independent Party.
- 2) In Tables 1 and 2, the formula for calculating the "Percentage of Districts with Cross Endorsed Candidates" = number of races with at least one cross endorsed candidate / number of seats in the chamber.
- 3) In Tables 1 and 2, the formula for calculating the "Average Votes for Cross Endorsed Candidates" = sum of all votes cast for all cross endorsed candidates on the cross endorsing minor party's line / total number of races with a cross endorsed candidate. This number represents the average total number of votes cast as cross endorsements in each chamber.
- 4) In Tables 1 and 2, the formula for calculating the "Average Vote Share Received on Cross Endorsed Lines" = total number of votes cast on cross endorsed lines / total number of votes cast in each race. Once the vote share cast on cross endorsed lines was calculated, those vote shares were averaged (mathematical mean) across all races in that election.
- 5) "Average" is used to describe the mathematical mean. All data were obtained from the Connecticut Secretary of State's Office.