



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS
CITIZEN'S ETHICS ADVISORY BOARD

*TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION
AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE*

March 11, 2013

*Statement of Charles F. Chiusano, Chairman
Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board*

Senate Bill 900 – AAC Revisions to the State Codes of Ethics

Good morning, Senator Musto, Representative Jutila, Ranking Members Senator McLachlan and Representative Hwang, and distinguished Committee members. For the record, I am Charles Chiusano, Chairman of the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board for the Office of State Ethics. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony concerning **Senate Bill 900**.

The primary purpose of **Senate Bill 900** is to provide necessary revisions to the Codes of Ethics. As you know, the CEAB is the governing body of the Office of State Ethics, which is statutorily tasked with the interpretation of the Codes of Ethics through the issuance of Advisory Opinions and adjudication of ethics enforcement matters brought under the ethics laws.

Members of the CEAB hail from all areas of the state and all walks of life. The CEAB cannot act unless it has a quorum of six members. Pursuant to section 1-82 and section 1-83 of the general statutes, the CEAB members must be physically present in order to vote on whether a violation of the Codes of Ethics has occurred. Lack of a quorum in CEAB proceedings would have devastating consequences to the operations of the agency. In 2012, the CEAB issued ten Advisory Opinions, approved 13 audits of registered client and communicator lobbyists, and was responsible for overseeing numerous settlements and Uniform Administrative Procedures Act (UAPA) Hearing matters related to disclosures. In addition, there are currently many pending enforcement matters that can potentially lead to adjudicatory board hearings, requiring the CEAB to act as the fact finder.

The proposed revisions to the governance of the CEAB presented in **Senate Bill 900** will minimize the possibility of a lack of a quorum and provide for more gradual replacement of its members through a staggering of terms. Therefore, the Board supports the language in section 2 of **Senate Bill 900**, which alternates CEAB appointments in a way that will prevent more than three terms from expiring in a single year. This amendment would alter the replacement of members, so that only two, and in one instance three, members would be replaced each year. Such revision to the general statutes will ensure that the CEAB is able to gather a quorum of six members during its proceedings.

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The Board also supports the language in section 3 that excludes from the term "public office" a justice of the peace or a notary public and thus permits such individuals to serve on the CEAB. The language in essence mirrors a similar provision that is found in the elections statutes. This amendment to the term "public office" will expand the pool of qualified candidates who could be eligible to serve on the CEAB, without diluting the conflict of interest requirements for such appointments.

I look forward to working with the Government Administrations and Elections Committee and members of the General Assembly in the future to perhaps consider allowing Board members to continue serving past the end of their terms for the limited purpose to complete adjudicating a case.

Again, thank you for raising **Senate Bill 900** and for your consideration of the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board's views concerning the Office of State Ethics agency proposal.