



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

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*TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE  
NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE*

*February 25, 2014*

*Statement of Stephen T. Penny, Commissioner  
State Elections Enforcement Commission*

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Good afternoon, Representative Janowski, Senator Looney, and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Stephen Penny.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to appear before you today regarding my nomination to the State Elections Enforcement Commission. I am honored to have been considered by Senate President Pro Tempore Williams to serve in this capacity.

On August 7, 2013, I was appointed a member of the SEEC on an interim basis, subject to the consent and confirmation of the Connecticut General Assembly. I have served in this capacity for the past six months.

As you know, the bipartisan and independent State Elections Enforcement Commission operates to ensure the integrity of the state's electoral process. The individuals who sit on the 5-person Commission, as I have learned over the past 6 months, receive reports of investigations into alleged election-law violations, issue decisions thereon and mete out penalties where appropriate, review and act upon audit reports, and award public financing grants, as well as making declaratory rulings and issuing advisory opinions on election law. Our reading load is generally about 400 pages received at the end of the day on the Friday preceding each of our Wednesday morning monthly meetings. I have also been appointed to serve as the hearing officer on several administrative hearings.

It is interesting, important and challenging work and I welcome the opportunity to continue serving on the Commission.

As for my personal history, after attending Manchester public schools, where I was captain of the high school multiple-time state-champion rifle team that practiced on a shooting range in the basement of an elementary school and regularly transported my weapon on the school bus--those were much simpler times--I graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University, and the University of Connecticut School of Law. For over 40 years now, I have been engaged in the general practice of law in the Town of Manchester. The nature of my practice has changed with time and circumstances. For many years I traveled to all corners of the state, though mostly to Fairfield County, in a labor law practice, principally in the automobile industry, and



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was once required by an NLRB administrative law judge to take the stand and examine myself when the attorney who was scheduled to examine me was delayed in another court proceeding. I'm proud to tell you that I knew the answers to all the questions. For ten years I served as the town attorney in a Hartford-area community, representing an administration of the opposite political party. When my own party re-captured the First Selectman's seat, I was replaced with one of my own kind. Politics can be a nasty business. I have from time to time also served as a special counsel for several other municipalities. Today, as a partner in the firm of Penny, Botticello & O'Brien, P.C., my practice focuses on commercial and residential real estate, litigation, representation of business clients, and land-use and zoning law.

I am a former mayor of Manchester, and served on the town's legislative body, the Board of Directors, for ten years. The nice thing about getting elected at age 29 is that you live long enough for people to forget your mistakes, and as an elder statesman you always look good compared to the incumbents. Now State-Senator Steve Cassano became the Deputy Mayor when we were both elected to our first terms in public office in 1977. In 1982, I was an unsuccessful candidate for the State Senate myself, losing by about 1% of the vote against the incumbent Senator. Apparently I was not very articulate, because many times as I was campaigning door-to-door in Glastonbury, having introduced myself as the Mayor of Manchester, I would overhear people say as I was leaving, "What was the Mayor of Manchester doing here?" At least you could get elected to the State Senate in those days for about \$10,000.00. I have served on a number of Charter Revision Commissions for Manchester, two or three as chairman. I also co-chaired a Racial Balance in Schools Committee and was heavily-involved in drafting a school choice report that received national attention while being totally ignored at home. I currently sit on the board of directors of the Cheney Hall Foundation, Cheney Hall being a community theater venue where the greatest newspaper editor of his day, *New York Tribune* founder Horace Greeley, and U.S. President William Howard Taft both once spoke, am a Past-President of the Manchester Rotary Club, and also belong to Friendship-Tuscan Lodge of Masons, and Sphinx Temple Shriners. For 30 years I've served as the public address announcer at the Manchester Road Race, one of the oldest and most respected such races in the country.

I appreciate your consideration and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.