



FUNDING FOR MINOR PARTY CANDIDATES UNDER THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM

By: Kristin Sullivan, Chief Analyst

CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM

The Citizens' Election Program is a voluntary program that provides public financing in the form of grants to statewide office and legislative candidates. Candidates may use the grants to finance their general election campaigns; major party candidates may also use them for primary campaigns (CGS § [9-700](#) et seq.).

MINOR PARTY

By law, a "minor party" is one that is not a major party and whose candidate for the office in question received, under the same party designation, at least 1% of the votes cast for the same office at the last regular election (CGS § [9-372\(6\)](#)).

ISSUES

How do minor party candidates become eligible to receive funding under the Citizens' Election Program (CEP)?

SUMMARY

Like major party candidates, minor party candidates qualify for CEP funding by, among other things, raising a specified amount of qualifying contributions (QCs). However, minor party candidates must additionally demonstrate support through either (1) the party's performance in the last regular election or (2) submitting a petition with a specified number of signatures.

A minor party candidate is eligible for a grant if the party's candidate for the same office in the same district at the last regular election received at least 10% of the votes cast for that office (i.e., met a "10% threshold"). In this case, the candidate receives a general election grant equal to one-third of the full grant amount for major party candidates running for the same office. A minor party candidate who is not eligible based on the party's performance in the last election may, as an alternative, use the petition procedure. He or she can

meet the 10% threshold and receive a one-third grant by obtaining a required number of signatures. In both instances, the candidate can receive a two-thirds

grant or a full grant by meeting a 15% threshold or 20% threshold, respectively (CGS § [9-705](#)) (State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) Declaratory Ruling 2008-01).

A minor party candidate who receives less than a full grant has the option of raising and spending additional contributions, called “differential contributions,” up to the full grant amount, provided they meet the criteria for QCs (e.g., they must be between \$5 and \$100 and cannot come from state contractors) (CGS § [9-702\(c\)](#)). One who reports a deficit in post-election disclosure statements may also be eligible to receive supplemental grant money if he or she received a greater percentage of the votes cast for all candidates for the office than the percentage of votes or signatures he or she used to become eligible for the grant (CGS § [9-705](#)).

QUALIFYING

By law, only “qualified candidate committees” are eligible for CEP funding. A candidate qualifies after submitting a program application that the SEEC approves.

Generally, all candidates seeking funding under the CEP must follow the same qualification process, regardless of whether they are a major or minor party candidate, or petition onto the ballot. They must:

1. file an affidavit with SEEC signifying their intent to abide by the program’s spending limits and other requirements;
2. collect a certain amount of QCs, depending on the office sought;
3. return QCs that do not meet specified criteria; and
4. apply to SEEC for a grant.

In the application, campaign treasurers must certify that they will comply with all state election laws, including campaign finance disclosure requirements. The committee of a candidate that completes this process and is approved by SEEC to receive a grant becomes a qualified candidate committee (CGS § [9-700\(12\)](#)).

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

A minor party candidate’s eligibility for a grant is also tied to the party’s performance in the last regular election. At a minimum, the minor party’s candidate for the same office in the same district at the last election must have met a 10% threshold by receiving at least 10% of the votes cast for that office. In that case, the candidate receives a general election grant equal to one-third of the full grant

amount for major party candidates running for the same office. If the candidate for the same office representing the same minor party at the last regular election met a 15% threshold by receiving 15% of the votes cast, the grant is two-thirds of the grant for major party candidates. If the previous candidate met a 20% threshold, the grant equals the grant amount for major party candidates.

If a minor party candidate is not eligible for a grant based on the party's performance in the last election, he or she can use the petition procedure. At a minimum, the candidate must meet a 10% threshold by having his or her petition signed by a number of qualified electors equal to at least 10% of the votes cast for the same office in the last regular election. (A qualified elector is a registered voter who is eligible to vote for the candidate for office.) In that case, the candidate receives a general election grant equal to one-third of the full grant amount for major party candidates running for the same office. The candidate receives a two-thirds grant or a full grant by meeting a 15% or 20% signature threshold, respectively. To use this procedure, candidates must use nominating petitions approved by the secretary of the state.

Table 1 shows the one-third, two-thirds, and full grant amounts for statewide office and legislative candidates running in the 2014 general election.

Table 1: 2014 General Election Grants for Minor Party Candidates

| <i>Office Sought</i> | <i>One-Third Grant</i> | <i>Two-Thirds Grant</i> | <i>Full Grant</i> |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Governor | \$2,166,800 | \$4,333,600 | \$6,500,400 |
| Secretary of the State, State Comptroller, State Treasurer, and Attorney General | 270,850 | 541,700 | 812,550 |
| State senator | 31,563.33 | 63,126.67 | 94,690 |
| State representative | 9,283.33 | 18,566.67 | 27,850 |

Source: SEEC (http://www.ct.gov/seec/lib/seec/press/2014/01292014_press_release_2014_grant_amounts.pdf)

KS:ro