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CGA Appropriations Committee

February 22, 2016

H.B. No. 5044] AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017

Comments submitted by Gloria Bent, President LWVCT

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT IS A NON-PARTISAN STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO EFFECTIVE PUBLIC POLICY AND THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN THEIR GOVERNMENT.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to comment on HB 5044, AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017

I write to express the League's deep concern about the additional funding reduction proposed for the State Election Enforcement Commission. We understand the financial constraints faced by the state of Connecticut at this time and the need for adjustment in funding. The SEEC, however, has already experienced drastic reductions. Since 2011 an ongoing series of funding cuts have led to staffing reductions and losses in non-personnel related funding. To inflict further reductions as the 2016 election season gets underway is unwise.

The League of Women Voters was a strong advocate for the establishment of the Citizens' Election Program. While we believe that CEP needs strengthening to further ensure public confidence in the transparency of funding sources, we are none the less proud that Connecticut is viewed by other states as having a model system for public campaign financing. But no system, however complete or well-meaning, is effective if it is unenforceable.

The League believes that adequate funding and support for state agencies responsible for supervising elections, enforcing election laws, and assuring the integrity of voting technology are fundamental to protecting citizens' right to vote and having their votes counted.

We believe, therefore, that it is imperative that the agency charged with administering CEP and enforcing Connecticut's election laws is adequately funded. The League of Women Voters of Connecticut urges the committee to make no additional cuts to the State Election Enforcement Commission's funding.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments.