



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

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***WRITTEN TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE***

***February 19, 2016***

***Statement of the Commissioners of the  
State Elections Enforcement Commission***

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Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, we are the Commissioners of the bi-partisan State Elections Enforcement Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony before the Committee concerning the State's budget.

In the wake of the Watergate scandal, the Connecticut General Assembly created a five member *bi-partisan and independent* State Elections Commission (Public Act 74-213) to ensure the integrity of the state's electoral process. The Commission was given the authority to investigate possible violations of the election laws, inspect campaign finance records and reports, refer evidence of violations to the Chief State's Attorney or to the Attorney General, issue advisory opinions and make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning revisions to the State's election laws. Since then the duty to administer the Citizens' Election Program and operate as the filing repository and disclosure source for campaign finance statements across the state have been added to the list.

Appointments of Commissioners to the Commission are divided equally amongst the Governor and the four highest ranking leaders of the General Assembly from both parties, making the Commission a truly bi-partisan, citizen body. In practice, it is rare that votes of the Commission are not unanimous, making it effectively a *non-partisan* body.

Collectively we represent the Commission and, collectively and unanimously, we are deeply concerned with the proposed budget cuts to SEEC. This is just the latest in a string of cuts that have followed the 2011 consolidation, which resulted in a loss of nineteen staff positions and 40% of our operating budget. The Commission is run on a shoestring budget now and any more cuts will surely jeopardize its functioning, and its ability to carry out its core mission.

SEEC has always fully cooperated during times of fiscal crisis. Each time the Governor's office has requested concessions, we have participated in give-backs and voluntary cuts. We fully recognize that these are drastic times and that the State faces extremely difficult decisions, and we will continue to perform our core roles as a watchdog agency—if we are able. The Governor's proposal, as we understand it, would leave SEEC without enough money to pay the agency's day to day expenses during a heavily contested Presidential election year, when we will be running the Citizens' Election Program for the General Assembly, including administering grants to nearly three hundred candidate committees and distributing more than ten million dollars in public funds. If our Commission cannot function on a daily basis, we will not be able to perform our duty as overseer of the electoral process and administrator of our incredibly successful public financing program.

We respectfully request that the legislature take into consideration these critical matters.

Commissioners of the State Elections Enforcement Commission:

Anthony J. Castagno - Chair  
Salvatore Bramante - Vice Chair  
Patricia Stankevicius  
Stephen Penny  
Michael J. Ajello