



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.®

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Testimony Presented Before

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

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Comments and opinions submitted by Jim Redman

Campaign Finance and Open Government Specialist

League of Women Voters of Connecticut

In support of:

H.B 5421, 5518, 5525, 5526

In opposition to:

H.B. 5519

Co-Chairs McLachlan, Flexer, and Fox, Vice Chairs Frantz, Slossberg and Winkler, Ranking member Devlin, and distinguished Committee members. I am Jim Redman, Campaign Finance and Open Government Specialist for The League of Women Voters of Connecticut.

I am also a member of the CEProud team, the LWVCT initiative to educate the citizens of Connecticut about the Citizens Election Program and advocate for its preservation and perfection. The LWVCT, the state branch of the LWVUS, with over 1500 women and men, is committed to promoting active participation in government, and influencing public policy through rigorous deliberation and consensus. The league strongly believes that campaign finance reform and its oversight by adequately funded regulatory agencies and/or commissions is necessary to ensure the public's "right to know", combat corruption, prevent undue influence,

and enable candidates to compete equitably and fairly in the pursuit of public office and/or service.

In support of:

H.B. No. 5421- AA ADOPTING THE INTERSTATE COMPACT TO ELECT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES BY POPULAR VOTE

The League strongly supports H.B. 5421. The League believes that in order to fairly represent and give equal weight to each individual vote this bill is necessary and should be adopted by the Legislature. In our existing electoral system the votes in many states have been diminished and become inconsequential. The determinative votes have been concentrated in approximately 10 identified battleground states. The majority of resources and campaigning takes place in these battleground states rendering the votes in remaining states insignificant. The adoption of the National Popular Vote will restore the weight and importance of every single vote regardless of geographical location, resulting in a more equitable and ultimately more democratic process.

H.B. NO. 5518 - AA PROTECTING THE CITIZENS ELECTION PROGRAM

The League strongly supports the objectives of H.B. 5518. The League, a strong advocate for Connecticut's model Citizens Election Program, believes this bill will make the necessary changes to Section 9-750 of the General Statutes that will ensure the continued funding of CEP.

CEP, while not perfect, has put Connecticut at the forefront of legislated campaign finance reform, a concept often championed in political discussions, think-tank analysis, and political punditry. The Connecticut Legislature, however, in bi-partisan fashion, had the courage and integrity to develop a program essential for good, honest, and transparent government. It is incumbent on all of us to embrace it, improve it, and fight for its survival.

H.B. NO. 5525-AA CONCERNING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM UNDER THE CITIZENS ELECTION PROGRAM

The league generally supports the repeal of Subsections (b) and (c) of Section 9-702 of the General Statutes. H.B 5525 addresses the need to limit the spending and/or contributions of a CEP “participating candidate” to a party committee at two hundred fifty dollars. One concern we have is whether a “non-participating” candidate of CEP will have an unfair advantage by not being subject to the aforementioned limit.

The League, although generally supportive of an unopposed candidate’s eligibility for a public grant, which this bill eliminates, H.B. 5525 does allow for a previously unopposed candidate to be eligible for a grant if the candidate is deemed to have an opponent in a general election.

H.B. NO. 5526 – AA CONCERNING DARK MONEY AND DISCLOSURE

The League strongly supports H.B. 5526. The League believes that full disclosure and “shining the light” on dark money, independent expenditures (foreign or domestic), sources and funding of advertising, and money paid to and distributed by consultants will strengthen our elections and ultimately our democracy. The good citizens of Connecticut deserve to know who is behind the political spending that influences their vote.

The alarming admission by United States Intelligence Agencies that Russia attacked and meddled in our elections by manipulating social media (Facebook, Twitter), on-line platforms and digitized communications, as well as states election systems serves up a warning to all of us to do everything in our power to combat these attacks, hold violaters accountable, and protect

our democratic elections and institutions. This bill will demand the disclosure necessary to begin to address this urgent issue.

In opposition to:

H.B. 5519- AN ACT ELIMINATING THE CITIZENS ELECTION PROGRAM

The League continues to strongly oppose the complete repeal and elimination of the Citizens Election Program. As stated earlier in my testimony the League believes Connecticut has arguably the finest campaign finance system in America; a model to emulate and adopt even with its imperfections and vulnerabilities. CEP is a system worth fighting for.

Time and time again we are reminded of a sitting governor accepting gifts for personal gain and undue influence.

In spite of the courageous bipartisan response to the corruption that led to the creation of the Citizens Election Program, advocacy groups like the League of Women Voters have had to regularly, and frankly far too often, come before you in defense of CEP.

And in spite of the Supreme Court Citizens United decision (2010), which narrowly decided that a “corporation” was a “person”, the League will continue to steadfastly advocate for Connecticut’s Citizens Election Program, under the stewardship of the State Elections Enforcement Commission, as it continues to give all of our citizens the opportunity to participate in fair, balanced and equitable elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Jim Redman, Campaign Finance and Open Government Specialist, LWVCT

