

Testimony of Tom Swan

Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

In support of H.B. No. 5421 (and SB 408) AN ACT ADOPTING THE INTERSTATE COMPACT TO ELECT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES BY NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE.

HB 5518 AN ACT PROTECTING THE CITIZENS' ELECTION FUND.

HB 5526 AN ACT CONCERNING DARK MONEY AND DISCLOSURE

On HB 5522 AN ACT RESTORING THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM, CONCERNING THE STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION AND REGARDING DISCLOSURE OF COORDINATED AND INDEPENDENT SPENDING.

And in opposition to HB 5519 AN ACT ELIMINATING THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM.

HB 5525 AN ACT CONCERNING CAMPAIGN FINANCE UNDER THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM.

March 19, 2018

Good Afternoon Senator Flexer, Senator McLachlan, Representative Fox, and other members of the GAE Committee, my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG). Thank you for holding today's hearing.

CCAG supports the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV) in HB 5421 to ensure that the basic principle of one person one vote is respected. Throughout the history of the United States reforms have been enacted to help us better live up to democratic ideals on which we were founded. These have included winning the right to vote for women, the Voting Rights Act, direct elections of Senators, and granting 18-year-olds the right to vote to name a few. The NPV compact will ensure that all votes will count the same when choosing a president regardless of where we live.

The NPV compact has passed in 11 states that have 165 electoral votes. Connecticut as the Constitution state should join the compact and guarantee that all votes are counted equally.

CCAG also supports HB 5518 AN ACT PROTECTING THE CITIZENS' ELECTION FUND. Ensuring there are adequate resources for the CEP is an essential part of our democracy in Connecticut.

We also support HB 5526 AN ACT CONCERNING DARK MONEY AND DISCLOSURE. Concern about the role of foreign interests, secret money and the lack of disclosure of on-line spending and to consultants should concern all of us. We commend the Committee for raising this bill and urge you to move it forward. SB 497 AN ACT PROHIBITING INDEPENDENT

EXPENDITURES BY FOREIGN-INFLUENCED BUSINESS ENTITIES AND LIMITING COVERED TRANSFERS covers some similar ground and should be considered as part of any final language.

We can not support HB 5522 AN ACT RESTORING THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM, CONCERNING THE STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION AND REGARDING DISCLOSURE OF COORDINATED AND INDEPENDENT SPENDING in its current form. Due to the escalation of outside spending, we are open to supplemental fundraising and grants for gubernatorial candidates. We strongly oppose eliminating any grants for unopposed candidates. The grants are already reduced, and many decline grants and others return a significant amount. It is a small amount of money and eliminating them would undermine the program, especially when one party has pretty much stopped putting up candidates in communities of color as part of a voter suppression strategy. In terms of organization expenditures, we did not support the changes that were made several years ago, but question whether changes will only drive money to secret places like Grow Connecticut. We would like to see these limits reduced but believe it must be done in combination with tightening up restrictions on independent expenditure – otherwise these changes will likely only result in more secret money since there are strong disclosure requirements for contributions to organization expenditures. We are disappointed that the increase in qualifying contribution limits (that only serve to protect incumbents and benefit rich people and was passed in secret without anyone testifying in favor it)

HB 5519 EIMINATING THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM is a bad idea and represents craven political gamesmanship. Everyone knows the CEP has had a positive impact on the state budget whether it be lessening corruption or positive changes like the enacted bottle bill expansion. The House Republican Caucus testimony submitted attempted to set up a false choice to gain a political advantage at the behest of their benefactors the Koch Brothers. Their attempt to look virtuous while attempting to gain such a blatant political advantage is shameful and must be rejected.

We also urge rejection of HB 5525 AN ACT CONCERNING CAMPAIGN FINANCE UNDER THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM.