



Contact: Cheri Quickmire (860) 539-6846
Kim Hynes (203) 979-4676

23 February, 2010

Report on the February 22 Government Administrations and Elections Committee Public Hearing

On February 22, Common Cause in Connecticut testified at the public hearing at the legislature on bills proposed to amend the Citizens' Election Program, held by the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee. Testimony on the Governor's proposed bill, [HB 5021](#) and the bill proposed by the House, [HB 5022](#) was heard over a period of six hours. Both proposed bills heard at the public hearing address issues raised in the district court decision. Common Cause in Connecticut has been actively urging legislators to act to fix the program immediately, and applauds the GAE for holding a public hearing on this issue.

The Citizens' Election Program was placed in jeopardy six months ago, when Judge Stefan Underhill ruled elements of the program unconstitutional in his decision in the *Green Party of Connecticut et al v. Jeffrey Garfield* case. Common Cause has been working actively with Attorney General Richard Blumenthal's office in this case as an Intervenor represented by the Brennan Center in New York. While Common Cause hopes for a good outcome when the Second Circuit rules on the appeal in this case, time is running too short to wait for the court's decision to act. Candidates running for statewide office, as well as legislative office, need to know that the program is viable.

The hearing was held in front of a standing room only crowd, lasting more than six hours as members of the public, advocates and state legislators had their say. Karen Hobert Flynn, Common Cause's Vice President for State Operations testified, saying, "Common Cause believes that there is a real need for urgent action and we believe we need to fix the law now, rather than wait for the Second Circuit ruling. Candidates running for statewide office need to know this program will be there for them. In fact, we are starting to see candidates jump ship because they don't believe that the General Assembly will pass a fix to guarantee the CEP's viability. This delay has without any doubt harmed the Citizens' Election program."

In addition, many Common Cause allies and coalition partners testified or submitted supportive testimony, including spokespersons from the League of Women Voters, CCAG, SEIU, AFSCME, Citizens for Economic Opportunity, the Sierra Club, the Working Families Party, College Democrats of Connecticut, and several Common Cause volunteers. A number of legislator/supporters also testified. Testimony from those advocating for the Citizens' Election Program was impassioned, clearly representing the strong support the program has among citizens, advocates and law makers.

Several opponents of the law, including Chris Healy, Chair of the Republican party and several lobbyists from the Association of Connecticut Lobbyists testified at the hearing and were really grilled by committee members.

The hearing was widely covered by the media, with articles appearing in The Hartford Courant, New Haven Register, The Day, Connecticut Post, CT Newsjunkie.com, and the CTMirror.com. WTNH covered the hearing and interviewed participants. CTN taped the entire hearing for viewing on their network.

Right after the hearing, we learned that the Governor and Democratic and Republican legislative leaders have agreed to put together a working group to iron out details of what a fix would look like. The Governor, the House Speaker, Senate President, and the House and Senate Minority leaders will each appoint a member and a staff person to the working group.

