

CLEAN ELECTIONS IN CONNECTICUT – SAFE FOR NOW

In a shocking move in November 2015, the Democratic leadership in the Connecticut legislature tried to suspend the Citizens' Election Program -- the state's landmark public financing system that lets candidates fund their campaigns without selling out to wealthy special interests and remove \$11.7 million from the Citizens' Election Fund.

We weren't going to let them get away with it -- not after how hard we fought to put Citizens' Election Program in place back in 2005. Since then, the CEP has helped ensure more competitive elections and a more diverse and representative legislature in Hartford, setting an example for the whole nation to follow.

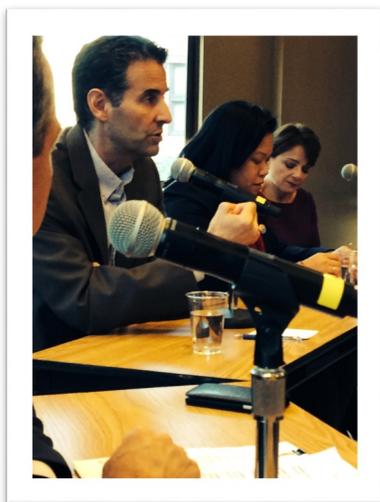
When Connecticut's legislative leadership tried to gut public financing, we spoke out and fought back. Together with our partners, we mobilized hundreds of members and activists in Connecticut and across the nation to call and email lawmakers, demanding that they keep their hands off the Citizens' Election Program. Standing by the side with our strong coalition were dozens of lawmakers who relied on that program for their own campaigns. They knew firsthand how important democracy reform is to ensure government of, by, and for the people is assured for future elections.

Thanks to all of your help, it worked! The legislative leaders backed down and proposed a new budget that leaves all funding intact for the Citizens' Election program. One thing is clear: the reforms work well and citizens will fight to keep them!

We know we all pay the price when we turn our government over to dark money, lobbyists and special interests. But when we win and defend forward-thinking reforms like we did in Connecticut in November, it keeps our democracy strong. At Common Cause we work to hold power accountable and fight for the public interest -- no matter who we're up against.



PUTTING GOVERNMENT BACK IN THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE



Congressman John Sarbanes, MD-3

On December 5th, Common Cause in Connecticut Executive Director Cheri Quickmire joined Vimala Phongsavanh, Assistant Director of Common Cause Rhode Island on a public Campaign Finance Reform panel in Providence, RI with Congressman John Sarbanes (MD-3) and hosted by Congressman David Cicilline (RI-1). Congressman Sarbanes has long been involved in the fight for fair elections and this year has introduced H.R. 20, *Government by the People Act*, which counters the influence of large political donors by providing every U.S. citizen with a \$50 tax credit for campaign contributions to candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives; provides a 6:1 match of public dollars for each small-donor contribution to participating candidates; and allows qualified candidates to earn additional public matching funds within 60 days of election day.

Congressman Cicilline has introduced H.R. 2695, *Sunlight for Unaccountable Non-profits Act* which features provisions that would make the tax returns of tax-exempt organizations, including PACs, available through a searchable online database and require organizations to disclose the names of donors who give more than \$5,000 to a non-profit that spends money on elections.

Both of these bills seek to enhance the voices of ordinary citizens engaged in the democratic process, shed light on the enormous amounts of money seeping into our elections and create a system whereby citizens could run for Congressional office without personal wealth or ties to party or special interest money. The lively panel discussion engaged citizens in a conversation on limiting the political influence of special interest money and engaging more citizens in the political process.

Please consider making a generous donation to Common Cause in Connecticut. You may donate at www.commoncause.org/ct or send a

check to us at 65 Hungerford Street, Hartford, CT 06106. If you have already given, Thank you!
Common Cause in Connecticut 65 Hungerford Street, Hartford, CT 06106 (860) 549-1220 www.commoncause.org/ct

CELEBRATING CONNECTICUT'S DEMOCRACY CHAMPIONS!

On November 11th Common Cause in Connecticut hosted our annual celebration at the Pond House Café in West Hartford. Members and friends came together to honor individuals whose work make an impact in strengthening democracy in Connecticut. This year we celebrated Carolyn Gabel-Brett, for her years of democracy, LGBT, and feminist activism, including working with Miles Rapoport to found Democracy Works in Connecticut in 1999 and serving as Executive Director from 2001 – 2003, and the Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut, for years of advocating for community education and public policy addressing issues of importance to low-income Connecticut residents.

In addition to honoring Common Cause Democracy Champions, we held a silent auction filled with wonderful items generously donated by businesses and individuals from across Connecticut and beyond. Guests bid on everything from gorgeous jewelry, art, sports and theater tickets, restaurant gift certificates to hand crafted sweet potato pie. Even an African Safari was on offer! A wonderful time was had by all, and we at Common Cause truly appreciate the generosity of our supporters and all those that donated the wonderful auction items!

If you were not able to join us, we hope you enjoy seeing some of these pictures of our event, taken by photographer Chris Randall



Common Cause President
Miles Rapoport



Dr. Bilal Dabir Sekou,
Chair of Common Cause in Connecticut



Honorees, Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut



Carolyn Gabel-Brett
Honoree



The Pond House Café



Board Member, James Barber
Common Cause in Connecticut

COMING SOON TO CONNECTICUT AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Common Cause in Connecticut will be advocating for passage of automatic voter registration (AVR) to Connecticut in 2016! Automatic voter registration is the process where eligible voters are automatically registered to vote by the state when they turn 18. Citizens may opt to join a political party or may opt to remove themselves from the voter rolls if they would rather not be registered.

Automatic voter registration ensures that all eligible people can vote, unless they opt out of the registration. This would replace the antiquated regimen of voters needing to remember to register by certain deadlines and re-register upon moving. It makes voter registration more efficient for voters and election administrators, and makes voter lists more accurate. It also allows organizations and campaigns to focus on educating voters and getting them to the polling booth rather than spending resources and time on voter registration. California and Oregon have made automatic voter registration the law, and 16 other states plus the District of Columbia have introduced bills that would institute AVR in their state. Keep an eye out for emails from Common Cause in Connecticut with updates about AVR and how you can get involved. If you are not currently receiving emails from us, you can sign up on our website at <http://www.commoncause.org/CT>.