

## House Republican Press Release

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### **Reps Hamzy, Burns: GOP Campaign Finance Measure would Close Publicly-Financed Election Law Loophole**



#### ***Other Reforms Would Strengthen Office of State Ethics, Improve Access to Voting Booth***

House Republicans today unveiled comprehensive reforms to curb publicly financed campaign abuse, ensure impartial ethics safeguards and allow for easier access to voting booths.

The **“Government for the People,”** proposals would provide for true transparency in publicly funded elections, real independence for watchdog agencies - especially the Office of State Ethics - and improved access to the ballot box, state Representatives William A. Hamzy, R-78<sup>th</sup> District, and Ron Burns, R-77<sup>th</sup> District, said today

#### **Cleaning Up Publicly Financed Campaigns**

The House Republican proposal would scale back the amount of money available to candidates based on when they qualify to access the Citizens Election Fund that taxpayers support starting 45 days before the election. In the special election for the 32<sup>nd</sup> District Senate seat, for example, the late-qualifying Democratic candidate received \$63,750 in taxpayer dollars to help cover his campaign expenses just 10 days before the special election on January 15<sup>th</sup>, they said.

The proposal also would modify the current required disclaimer statement on campaign mailings and commercials to include language stating they have been “paid for in part by taxpayer dollars” from the Citizens Election Fund, they said.

“Voters who receive campaign mailers or hear political commercials supporting candidates who have received grants from the taxpayer-financed Citizens Election Fund could easily conclude from the required disclaimer language that the flyer or advertisement was entirely paid for by the candidate’s campaign committee,” Representative Hamzy said. “That is misleading to say the least since it implies that the mailer or the ad was paid for only from private campaign contributions. In the interest of full disclosure, voters should know if taxpayers footed the bill for a portion of a candidate’s campaign expenses.”

#### **Strengthen Office of State Ethics – Don’t Strip It**

House Republicans also proposed strengthening oversight by the Office of State Ethics by requiring all lawmakers to disclose any potential personal conflicts they might have with any individual that might have a bearing on pending legislation. Instead of stripping

the agency of authority as other lawmakers have proposed, House Republicans seek to give it greater independent oversight.

The measure also would provide for the revocation or reduction of state pensions for crimes relating to a state employee or state official's official duties and make it a violation for witnessing but not reporting a bribe.

"As state legislators, we represent both our constituents and the people of Connecticut. We have a special obligation to them to be completely above board in everything we do. To do otherwise would be to betray the public trust. We also are duty bound not to overlook unethical conduct or illegal activities by our legislative colleagues, other elected officials or state employees," Representative Burns said. "I believe the ethics reforms we proposed today will reassure the public that we are serious about preventing the abuses that tarnished the reputation of our state over the past few years and in ensuring that those who break the law in the performance of their official duties will pay dearly for their offenses."

### **Ballot Box Access**

House Republicans also proposed amending the state Constitution to allow any registered voter to use an absentee ballot to provide greater access to the ballot box. Currently the state imposes restrictions on absentee balloting and requires voters to prove that they cannot cast a ballot in person election day.