

House Republican Press Release

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HOUSE REPUBLICAN ETHICS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE CLEANUP IS TRUE REFORM: GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE



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

The “*Government for the People*,” proposals highlight the need for stronger governmental reform: true transparency in publicly funded elections, real independence for watchdog agencies, particularly the overhauled state Ethics Commission and unfettered access to the ballot box, House Republican Leader Lawrence F. Cafero said.

Cleaning Up Publicly Financed Campaigns

“The recent examples in two special elections have revealed flaws in our publicly funded campaign laws. We need more detailed reporting requirements and show voters what they are really getting for their money because taxpayers are footing the bill,” Cafero said. “This fall a minimum of \$10 million of taxpayers’ money will be available to candidates. We have a responsibility to make sure there are not abuses and that public money is being used prudently.”

Cafero’s 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 32nd District Senate seat, for example, the late-qualifying Democratic candidate received \$63,750 to spend on just over one week before the special election Jan. 15.

The candidate’s disclosure form indicated he spent \$50,500 of taxpayers’ money on two mailings but provides no details. “I’m not sure that qualifies as ‘election reform,’” Cafero said.

Strengthen Ethics Commission – Don’t Strip It

The Republicans also proposed strengthening Ethics Commission oversight 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

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

“The public will have less confidence in their elected officials if lawmakers police themselves. What we need is greater independent oversight by the Ethics Commission, not a group of lawmakers to sit in judgment of one another. Thirty years ago the legislature eliminated the legislative ethics committee and created the Ethics Commission for exactly that reason,” Cafero said.

Ballot Box Access

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.

Cafero said thousands of potential voters are disenfranchised because the state makes it more difficult to vote than it should. “Many college students away from home, those who have difficulty getting to the polls and many others simply don’t vote because Connecticut makes it harder than it should to cast their ballot,” Cafero said