

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Michael Caron pushes government reforms



Joins with group of legislators in offering proposals to continue cleaning up state government in Hartford and assuring that government works for you and not the special interests.

Rep. Michael Caron, R-44, Killing, Plainfield, Sterling, has joined in a press conference in Hartford supporting legislative proposals that provide for stronger governmental reform. The proposals are aimed at true transparency in publicly funded elections and real independence for the state Ethics Commission.

“Connecticut has taken strides by creating an independent commission to hear complaints of ethics violations in state government,” said Michael Caron. “The legislature also has adopted publicly financed election campaigns to eliminate the influence of special interests. Our proposals will strengthen these two initiatives and provide more public trust in government.”

The proposals include:

Cleaning Up Publicly Financed Campaigns

“Recent examples in two special elections have revealed flaws in the publicly funded campaign laws. We need more detailed reporting requirements to show voters what they are really getting for their money, because taxpayers are footing the bill,” Caron 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.”

Caron’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. In a recent special election for the 32nd District Senate seat, for example, the Democratic candidate qualified for public funding just 10 days before the election and received \$63,750 to spend during the final days before the Jan. 15 special election.

The candidate’s disclosure report indicated he spent \$50,500 of taxpayers’ money on a political consultant but provided no details. “I’m not sure that qualifies as election reform,” Caron said.

Strengthen the State Ethics Commission

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,” Caron 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.

Caron said thousands of potential voters cannot get to the polls for legitimate reasons, and the state makes it more difficult to vote by absentee ballot. “Many people who are away from home, those who have difficulty getting to the polls and many others simply don’t vote because Connecticut makes it harder than in some other states to cast their ballot,” Caron said

Caron serves the 44th Assembly District of Killingly, Plainfield and Sterling in the state House of Representatives.