

House Republican Press Release

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GREENWICH DELEGATION: ETHICS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE CLEANUP IS TRUE REFORM



“Government for the People”

HARTFORD –Comprehensive reforms to prevent publicly financed campaign abuse, ensure impartial ethics safeguards and allow for easier access to voting booths proposed today by House Republicans along with, state Representatives Livvy R. Floren, Lile R. Gibbons, and

Claudia “Dolly” Powers.

The “*Government for the People,*” proposals emphasize three different reforms: 1) true transparency in publicly funded elections; 2) real independence for watchdog agencies, particularly the overhauled state Ethics Commission and 3) unfettered access to the ballot box.

Cleaning Up Publicly Financed Campaigns

“The past two special elections have revealed flaws in our 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,” said Rep. Livvy Floren, a member of the Government Administration and Elections committee.

“This fall a minimum of \$10 million of taxpayers’ money will be available to candidates. We have a responsibility to make sure there are no abuses and that public money is being used prudently”, added Rep. Floren, who spoke at the press conference unveiling the ethics proposal.

The proposal would scale back the amount of money available to candidates based on when they qualify to access the Citizens Election Fund 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.

Strengthen Ethics Commission – Don’t Strip It

By requiring all lawmakers to disclose any potential personal conflicts they might have with any individual that might have a bearing on pending legislation the legislature would strengthen the Office of State Ethics’ oversight. 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,” said Rep. Lile Gibbons.

Ballot Box Access

Republicans also proposed amending the state Constitution to allow any registered voter to use an absentee ballot, hopefully to provide convenient 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.

“Let’s simplify and streamline our process. Other states already do this successfully- we should too. Many college students away from home, those who have difficulty getting to the polls and others, simply don’t vote because Connecticut makes it harder than it should to cast their ballot,” Rep. Dolly Powers said.