

House Republican Press Release

February 26, 2008
Press Office: 860-240-8700

REP. GIEGLER BACKS ETHICS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM



HARTFORD – On Monday, February 25, State Rep. Janice Giegler (R-Danbury, New Fairfield) joined with fellow House Republican leaders in introducing 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.

Rep. Giegler noted that two recent special elections, for a state house seat in the Naugatuck Valley and a state senate seat in western Connecticut, revealed flaws in the publicly funded campaign laws that are now in effect. Specifically, 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 state senate seat, for example, a late-qualifying candidate received \$63,750 to spend on just over one week before the special election Jan. 15.

“This is clearly a problem,” said Rep. Giegler. “The taxpayers are expected to cover \$10 million in campaign funds to candidates this fall. We have to make sure that the system is not ripe for abuse and that money is sensibly used.”

The proposal also calls for strengthening the state Ethics Commission’s 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, it would give the agency greater independent oversight.

“There is little value to having legislators police themselves when it comes to potential ethics violations,” said Rep. Giegler. “The Ethics Commission was established for that purpose and given the fact that we continue to see ethics problems at the state and local level, this commission should have more resources, not less.”

Currently, the state imposes restrictions on absentee balloting and requires voters to prove that they cannot cast a ballot in person election day. The proposal would amend the state Constitution to allow any registered voter to use an absentee ballot to provide greater access to the ballot box.