

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

Hetherington Concerned over Bill to Define Truth



“Could Compromise Free Speech”

HARTFORD – State Representative John Hetherington, Republican Leader on the Legislature’s Government Administration and Elections Committee (GAE), expressed concern over a bill approved by the GAE committee to create a Connecticut Code of Fair and Truthful Campaign form.

The bill, SB-547 An Act Concerning Accountability in Campaign Advertising, creates a “Connecticut Code of Fair and Truthful Campaign Conduct” form which candidates would sign stating that they will be moral, honest and condemn everything bad that goes on in their campaign for office and that they will hold their staff accountable.

Another provision would require “citations” for campaign charges and make it a criminal offense for one to make charges against one’s opponent without “an identifiable reference to publicly accessible records”. The bill does not address records that are not “publicly accessible.”

Connecticut Common Cause, the nonpartisan citizens lobby dedicated to improving the way state government operates provided testimony opposing this bill at the GAE public hearing. Connecticut Common Cause has been a leading voice in reforming state government for over thirty years.

Rep. Hetherington said, “The bill is utterly unworkable and, more important, an unacceptable burden on free speech. These are all laudable goals, but they go too far and are completely unattainable. This bill is just another example of redefining what the first amendment should include with respect to campaigns.”

The bill also included a robo-call provision but instead of banning automated political calls outright the bill requires a recorded message identifying who authorized the call before a recording can play.

The bill awaits action in the State Senate, then if approved the bill moves to the State House for debate. For more information on the bill go to the General Assembly’s website:

http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=547&which_year=2007&SUBMIT1.x=11&SUBMIT1.y=13

Representative Hetherington (R-125) represents almost all of New Canaan and the southwest corner of Wilton.