



## TESTIMONY

of the

### CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES

to the

### GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

February 29, 2008

#### **CCM opposes Section 5 of Raised House Bill 5029 - “An Act Concerning the Ethics Code for Government Officials”**

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) has worked with the committee and the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) during the last several legislative sessions in an attempt to craft language that would promote the adoption of ethics codes in municipalities statewide in a way that would (a) avoid costly mandates, (b) not hurt volunteerism at the local level, and (c) work for all 169 towns and cities.

**In a survey CCM completed throughout the Fall of 2005, to which 159 municipalities responded, it was identified that:**

- ***92 municipalities already have an ethics code*** in place that meets the needs of their community.
- ***86 municipalities have a procedure for addressing allegations*** of unethical behavior.
- ***77 municipalities have a policy on financial disclosure.***

Since the survey many towns have adopted a code or updated their existing code. CCM has been compiling a searchable database of these codes to provide a resource for other municipalities wishing to adopt or update their own local code. To date, we have compiled copies of local codes from more than 80 municipalities.

While, on its face, the issue of ethics appears to be a simple one, it becomes very complex when attempting to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to the diverse towns and cities of Connecticut. CCM and COST have worked with municipalities to illustrate to the members of the General Assembly the adverse impact aspects of certain past ethics packages would have had on municipal government operations, attracting volunteers, and recruiting and retaining municipal officials and employees.

As in the past four sessions, **CCM can agree to require that all municipalities** (1) ***adopt a code of ethics***, (2) ***establish a mechanism for addressing allegations of unethical behavior*** in a manner that meets the needs of their individual community, if they do not already have such in place; (3) ***establish a policy to address financial disclosure*** by local officials; and (4) ***report by a date certain on what they did or already had in place.***

**CCM opposes any mandate, as outlined in this bill, that municipalities adopt a state-prescribed code of ethics.**

## ## ##

If you have any questions, please contact Kachina Walsh-Weaver, Senior Legislative Associate of CCM via email [kweaver@ccm-ct.org](mailto:kweaver@ccm-ct.org) or via phone (203) 498-3026.