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### Don't Scrap Campaign Finance Law — Fix It

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Connecticut — not so long ago known as "Corrupticut" — can't afford to lose its system of voluntary public financing of state election campaigns, which is designed to keep the often-baleful influence of special-interest money out of politics.

The Citizens Election Program was enacted in 2005 and went into effect for legislative elections last year, when an impressive 83 percent of state Senate candidates and 74 percent of House candidates made use of the public funding. Candidates for statewide office were to qualify for public subsidies in next year's elections.

But Thursday in Bridgeport, U.S. District Judge Stefan Underhill struck down key parts of the law as unconstitutional. He said that the statute's provisions make it too difficult for independent and minor party candidates to qualify for the public money, which is drawn from a fund filled with proceeds from the sale of abandoned property.

State Attorney General Richard Blumenthal — supported by Gov. M. Jodi Rell and Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz — said Friday he will seek a stay of the decision while he files an appeal with the U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals. A stay will allow the program to continue to operate during what could be a long appeal process.

The reform was an understandable and appropriate response to scandals in the governor's and state treasurer's offices during the John G. Rowland and Paul Silvester years. Mrs. Rell, who succeeded Mr. Rowland as governor after he resigned in disgrace, was instrumental in passing the law.

On Friday, the governor noted that "Connecticut's campaign finance reform act is a model in the nation." She said she would not let Connecticut "return to the days of unfettered special interests controlling our electoral process. If necessary, we can amend the law to address the concerns of minor parties."

If it is necessary to amend the law to take care of the court's concerns, so be it. But the state should fight hard on appeal.

And further, the citizens election fund should be protected from raids by the governor — paradoxically, the mother of this reform — and lawmakers who see the money as a tempting target in their search for ways to balance the budget. They should leave the fund alone. If it can be made to pass constitutional muster, it will remain a bulwark against corruption.

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