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### POLITICS

## State Gets Time To Appeal Campaign Finance Ruling

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The federal judge who last week threw out Connecticut's landmark campaign finance reform system gave the state at least a two-week reprieve to allow it to appeal, state officials said.

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said that U.S. District Judge Stefan R. Underhill granted the two-week stay during a Monday morning teleconference with state officials and the minor-party political officials whose suit resulted in Underhill's legal opinion Thursday that the reforms are unconstitutional.

Blumenthal said the stay has the effect of permitting the new law that governed public financing of state election campaigns to continue in force while the state files an expedited appeal. State officials said the stay is likely to be extended.

The Green Party of Connecticut, lead plaintiff in the suit that overturned what is known as the Citizens' Election Program, urged the state legislature Monday to remedy deficiencies identified in the law by Underhill rather than proceeding with the time and expense of an appeal.

"We believe that Judge Underhill provided the legislature with a blueprint for fixing the law," said Andrew Schneider, executive director of the ACLU of Connecticut, which represented the Green Party. "If the legislature follows through with that, we believe that would be the most expeditious way of resolving the situation."

Underhill ruled last week that the campaign finance reform laws enacted by the legislature in November 2005 gave an unfair financial advantage to Republican and Democratic candidates for election, while imposing an unconstitutional and arbitrary burden on fundraising by minor-party candidates.

The intention of the law was to lessen the impact of special interest money on state election campaigns by providing candidates with tens of thousands of dollars in public campaign money. Under the law, the money is to come from proceeds of the sale of abandoned property.

Blumenthal said all parties to the suit agreed on the temporary stay. He said the stay will allow the parties to reach consensus on the details and scheduling of the expedited appeal. Blumenthal predicted that the stay will be extended to allow the law to remain in force during the appeal, the likely duration of which is unknown. Some candidates for state office already are preparing for the 2010 elections.

"In the meantime, campaign finance reform can continue without interruption or disruption," Blumenthal said. "We believe our arguments on appeal will be powerful and persuasive — invoking

U.S. Supreme Court precedent supporting reforms designed to stop campaign corruption and impropriety."

Had the law been struck down immediately, Blumenthal said, the 2010 election cycle would have been thrown into "paralysis, chaos and uncertainty."

"We will ask the court of appeals to hear us as soon as possible, and we are delighted that all parties concur that a swift and early review is necessary," he said.

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