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NEW JERSEY CITIZENS' CLEAN ELECTIONS COMMISSION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the New Jersey Citizens' Clean Elections Commission

FROM: Gina Marie Winters
Associate Research Analyst

DATE: September 27, 2005

SUBJECT: Minutes of August 18, 2005 Meeting

The August 18, 2005 meeting of the New Jersey Citizens' Clean Elections Commission took place at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, Monmouth County. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Schluter. In addition to the chairman, also present were Vice-Chairman Steven Lenox, Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein, Assemblyman Bill Baroni, Mr. Victor De Luca, Ms. Carol Murphy, and Mr. Curtis Tao.

After the Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, the Acting Secretary gave a brief description of the Clean Elections Pilot Project. The Acting Secretary called the roll, and the commission had a quorum. The minutes of the June 17 meeting were approved, with a minor change.

The commission then began to take testimony. First to testify was Ms. Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, Executive Director of New Jersey Citizen Action. She explained what Citizen Action is doing to assist Clean Election candidates, and spoke about Citizen Action's experience in door to door canvassing.

The second individual who testified was Mr. David Donnelly, National Campaigns Director from Public Campaign. He provided information about Clean Election campaigns in other states.

The next individual who testified was Ms. Marilyn Askin, State President of AARP. She described the mailings that AARP is doing to educate the public about clean elections and ask members of the public who support clean elections to sign a pledge indicating their support. Assemblyman Baroni asked if AARP would distribute the list of individuals who support clean elections to the candidates. Ms. Askin agreed to ask her advisory council whether the list could be distributed to them.

Next, each candidate from the 13th district was called to testify before the commission. First was Mr. Michael Dasaro, a Democratic candidate. He spoke about his experience as a clean election candidate, and expressed his hope that the project would succeed. Commissioner Tao asked the candidate to think about three major areas: the time period for soliciting contributions, the amount and quantity of contributions, and the manner in which contributions can be received, including the possibility of so-called "safe harbor" events. Mr. Dasaro declined to respond to the first two points until after the election, but supported the idea of safe harbor events.

Ms. Amy Handlin, a Republican candidate, was next to testify. She outlined key problems with the program. First, she thought either the number of contributions should be lessened, or alternately, the time period to collect contributions should be lengthened. She also offered ideas for other methods of qualifying. Second, she asked the commission to consider lifting the ban on credit card contributions. Third, she was concerned about last minute attacks on candidates, and whether public money would be released in time for a candidate to respond. Fourth, she advocated outlawing wheeling. She then responded to questions from and comments by the commissioners. Commissioner De Luca advocated sending a letter about clean elections to the municipal and county chairs to educate them about the program.

Commissioner Greenstein raised the issue of making changes to the clean elections program before the election. The commissioners discussed the possibility of the Legislature reconvening to make changes, or other ways of changing the program.

Next to testify was Mr. Mike Hall of the Green Party, followed by Mr. Greg Orr of the Green Party. They discussed the pilot project and raised issues relevant to third party candidates, including the amount of funding third party candidates receive if they qualify. They were followed by Assemblyman Samuel Thompson, a Republican. He discussed his experiences as a clean election candidate. He stated that taking part in the pilot project does not free a candidate from the chore of raising money, and suggested reducing the number of contributions a candidate is required to collect. He also raised questions about the participation of supportive organizations, as well as the receipt forms. The Assemblyman also raised concerns about the amount of seed money available. There was discussion regarding whether seed money is required to be used to buy tickets to local events, and whether the amount is sufficient.

The Commission then called Mr. Bill Flynn, a Democratic candidate, to testify. He expressed his position that the campaign for every elected office in the State should be publicly financed. He also stated that even if he and his running mate did not qualify, they would comply with clean election regulations, if their opponents would agree to do so. Commissioner Tao

raised the issue of a stepped process for releasing funds to candidates; Mr. Flynn thought it was a good idea.

Ms. Linda Selier, a member of the public, was then called to testify. She commented on the lack of information available to the public regarding clean elections.

The Chairman then asked the commissioners for any thoughts they might have. Commissioner Tao thanked the individuals who attended the meeting. The commissioners then discussed the possibility of a special session of the Legislature, or asking ELEC to reevaluate their interpretation of the statute. Assemblyman Baroni asked the Office of Legislative Services to make a list of what provisions of the program are statutory and what provisions are regulatory.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:30 p.m.