

NetChoice *Promoting Convenience, Choice, and Commerce on The Net*

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March 25, 2013

Sen. Ed Jutila & Sen. Anthony Musto
Government Administrations and Elections Committee
Room 2200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: **Opposition to SB 5 –Concerning Changes to Campaign Finance Laws and Other Election Laws**

Dear Chairman Jutila and Chairman Musto:

We ask you to oppose SB 5.

Today, candidates and campaigns are experimenting with new ways to engage voters using online tools as an exciting and inexpensive medium. However, we worry that SB 5 could chill the use of this medium while exposing the personal information of Connecticut's politically active citizens. Instead, we suggest that you follow Florida and Maryland and update your political disclosure laws for the internet age.

SB 5 exposes private information of Connecticut residents:

SB 5 § 9(h)(1) requires any group that places a political ad to disclose on the internet the name and address of *every* individual who contributes money to the group – even if they only contribute a dollar. This exposes the private information of residents and impairs Connecticut's efforts to protect the privacy of its individuals.

Moreover, when applied to nationwide elections, this disclosure will include the names and addresses of residents in other states. If the shoe were on the other foot, would you want your residents' personal information exposed because of a disclosure mandated by New York's legislature?

SB 5 depresses the ability to fundraise of any organization that is also political

SB 5 impairs the fundraising ability of organizations that also engage in political advertising. Connecticut residents will stop supporting political groups once residents learn that their contribution means the disclosure of their name and address on the internet.

For example, SB 5 would require teacher's unions to disclose the name and address of *every* member of the union if the union places a political ad. Donors to groups like Planned Parenthood or the NRA might be targeted if their names and addresses were disclosed on the internet.

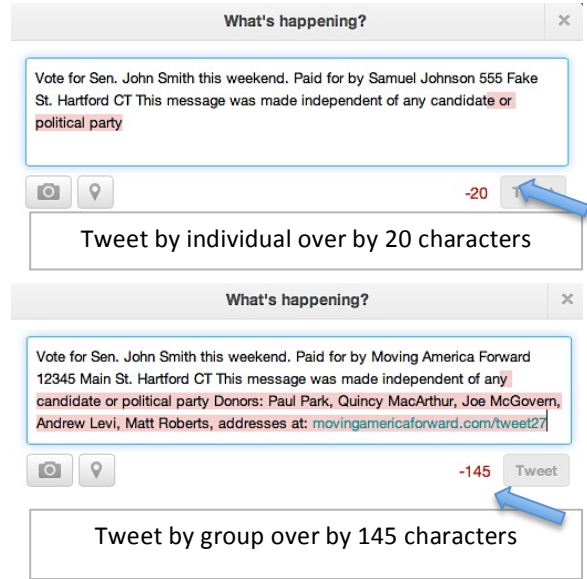
These old rules don't work on the internet

Because of limited screen space on computers and mobile devices, SB 5's required disclosures do not work. They do not work for online ads found on the side of webpages, ads as part of search engine results, and ads in text messages.

These problems are even worse on the small screens of smart phones and tablets.

Finally, services like Twitter are becoming a political tool. But Twitter limits each message to 145 characters. As you can see in the examples, even a promoted tweet of "Vote for Sen. John Smith this weekend" is made unworkable by SB 5.

Quite simply, the old rules for campaign disclosures on print, radio, and television do not work in the online world.



Amend SB 5 to protect online political ads

In 2010, Florida and Maryland changed their election laws to allow candidates to use the benefits of online political advertising. We recommend Connecticut follow in Florida and Maryland's footsteps and make exceptions to your state's election laws for:

- Text ads that do not exceed 200 characters and have a link that directs users to another Internet website that contains the required disclosures; and
- Small display ads "where compliance with the requirements [are] not reasonably practical due to the size of the graphic or picture link and the link directs the user to another Internet website that complies . . ."

We appreciate your consideration of our views, and please let us know if we can provide further information.

Sincerely,

Steve DelBianco
Executive Director, NetChoice

Carl M. Szabo
Policy Counsel, NetChoice

cc: Members of the Committee

NetChoice is a trade association of e-Commerce businesses. More information at www.netchoice.org