

Legislators Muzzle Voters!



20,000 signatures ignored and ballot advisory questions killed

The Rhode Island Supreme Court managed to add its own insult to the injuries inflicted by the Assembly when it took away the Governor's ability to put non-binding questions on the ballot. The Assembly had earlier refused to even discuss a petition signed by 20,000 citizens asking that a Voter Initiative question be placed on this year's ballot. *Poll results showed that 91 percent of the voters wanted the voter initiative question on the ballot.*

In effect, the Legislative and the Judicial branches of Rhode Island's government have *declared* that the opinions and actions of Rhode Island citizens are worthless and have no role in state government.

For 12 years Operation Clean Government has been a non-partisan leader in expressing the ideas and actions of Rhode Is-

land citizens. That is why civic leaders are expecting OCG to lead the charge against these insults inflicted by the Assembly and the Court. Highly respected, non-partisan jurists, journalists and commentators as Robert Flanders, Arlene Violet, Marc Cote, Dave Layman, John Howell, Dan Yorke, Sara Quinn and Tom Ward are urging the state's citizens to rally around OCG's flag with membership participation and financial support. Their comments are found on page four of this newspaper.

These events cry out for profound citizen outrage at the status quo in RI government. This newspaper will demonstrate the history of what OCG has been able to accomplish in the past 13 years and the methods used to effect these goals. Your help is needed to continue the fight.

OCG's 13 year success due to six key activities

In 1993, Chairman Bruce Lang concluded his first OCG newsletter editorial with these words: *Operation Clean Government will be an Independent Public Advocate for the people of Rhode Island. To succeed, we need you to join us and get involved. I hope you will.* What has happened since that first newsletter in November 1993? The answer is: "Plenty!"

Here's what OCG has been doing:

1. Teaching candidates how to run for public office with biennial Candidate Schools, run in 2002, '04 and '06. 500 public office aspirants attended – including Governor Carcieri, Mayor Laffey and Mayor Cicillini.
2. Producing a weekly cable TV program:

"State of the State." It interviews candidates for office, elected officials and people representing key issues.

3. Monitoring state agencies such as the Board of Elections and the Ethics Commission – while keeping watch on the integrity of the legislative process itself.
4. Filing complaints with the Ethics Commission and the Board of Elections when conflicts of interest or questionable activities are found.
5. Recognizing good citizenship performances with *Golden Broom Awards*.
6. And, most importantly, keeping the public informed of unfolding events through newsletters, web site, press releases, forums and electronic news bulletins.



Candidate Schools were run by OCG in 2002, 2004 and 2006 with more than 500 attendees. Here Governor Carcieri, an alumnus of the 2002 class, addresses the 2006 class.



Soliciting petition signatures is a basic act of citizen activism. OCG member Bob Ziegler of Bristol solicits signatures from shoppers in a local supermarket. OCG members participated in the state-wide quest for 20,000 supporters of Voter Initiative. Melissa Barbeau of Barrington signs on.



Political rallies play a key role in sponsorship of reform legislation. Here, former Supreme Court Justice Robert Flanders urges citizens to support Voter Initiative in a State House rotunda rally. At left, is Larry Fitzmorris, President of Portsmouth Concerned Citizens.

Ethics complaints, publicity, forums, rallies, website, TV shows, talk shows, newspapers, all have key role in fighting bad government

Newspaper reports



E-mail bulletins



Website



Publicity and Op-Eds



Why does Rhode Island need Voter Initiative ... now?!

- To allow citizens:
- to propose laws,
 - repeal laws,
 - or amend the State Constitution

Brochures



TV Shows



Golden Broom Awards



Expert panels



Legislative testimony

Talk shows

Hundreds attend two forums on Separation of Powers



Photo, courtesy of The Newport Daily News
Newport area residents expressed enthusiasm for the separation of powers legislation sponsored by Governor Donald Carcieri at an informational forum held January 27 at the Atlantic Beach Club in Middletown. The Newport County Chamber of Commerce, the Rhode Island Separation of Powers Committee (RISOP), and the Newport Daily News sponsored the event. Participants included Governor Carcieri, former U.S. Representative Ronald K. Macchiesi, Professor Carl Dogan and Bruce Lang, president of the Rhode Island Separation of Powers Committee.



Photo by Will Barbeau
Operation Clean Government held a separation of powers dinner/forum attended by more than 240 on January 20 at Rhodes on the Pasture. See story on page 3.

Citizen petitions



Here's how OCG helped change R.I.

OCG ethics complaint costs Celona \$130,000

Two complaints filed by Operation Clean Government in 2003 and 2004 against Senator John Celona from North



John Celona

Providence for using his public office to obtain financial gain resulted in the largest fine ever levied by the Ethics Commission: \$130,000.

A federal investigation began after OCG's complaints were filed with the Ethics Commission and Celona resigned his Senate seat. He then pleaded guilty to federal

corruption charges and is now awaiting trial. U.S. Attorney Robert Corrente has informed Ethics Commission prosecutor Jason Gramitt that Celona "is providing significant assistance in an important public corruption investigation."

The on-going investigation could lead to charges against the organizations which paid Celona to support their interests. From his position as Corporations Committee chair, Celona controlled legislation affecting CVS, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and Roger Williams Medical Center, while he was on the payroll of each of these companies. One of the major bills killed in his committee was the "Pharmacy Freedom of Choice," a bill he supported and co-sponsored before becoming a consultant for CVS.

Additionally, Celona was on the payroll of New England Ambulance Co., promising to introduce the company "to key people at health-care centers who handle ambulance runs." Celona did not disclose his compensation from CVS, BC/BS and New England Ambulance Co. to the Ethics Commission.

OCG hits Board of Elections rip-offs and confusion



OCG's issues with the Board of Elections peaked in the mid-nineties when research revealed that members were participating in the state pension system and receiving health care benefits — despite working less than the required 20 hours per week for such benefits. (They actually worked an average of less than 2 hours a week.) As a result of OCG research, the benefits were stopped.

More current — and more serious — the Board went for ten years with an interim policy on ballot advocacy that created confusion and contradictions. Each year, the Board was going to go to the General Assembly for legislation to resolve the problems. Finally, this year, there is new legislation with campaign finance laws for groups advocating for or against ballot questions.

OCG history started with 1991 banking crisis

The 1991 banking crisis was brought on by legislators ignoring warnings that the state's system for insuring financial units would go broke if only one institution failed. One did, and it did.

Three citizen groups grew out of that debacle: Operation Clean Sweep, Rhode Island Taxpayers Association and "US" PAC. As Bruce Lang put it in 1993, "As sepa-

rate organizations we began to have an impact. However... (for) a long term impact on our state we needed to join forces."

Continuing, Lang wrote: "So here we are! We have formed Operation Clean Government... (with) the common purpose to promote honest, responsible and responsive state government."

OCG has been going strong since.

Conflict of interest costs Fox \$10,000



Majority Leader Gordon Fox is besieged by reporters as he emerges from an Ethics Commission hearing that fined him \$10,000. This resulted from a complaint filed by OCG about his vote on a no-bid lottery deal for GTECH which was represented by his law firm.

Ethics Commission working well

It is a changed Ethics Commission that fined former Senator John Celona \$130,000 for ten violations of the Ethics Code as outlined in two complaints filed by Operation Clean Government. OCG representatives were received cordially at the hearing, a sharp contrast to the hearing the Commission held in 2002 to decide whether to fine three OCG members and OCG itself a total of \$60,000 for filing so-called frivolous complaints. Charges were dropped after strong defense by OCG's legal team.

The investigation of Celona by Jason Gramitt was thorough, his presentation was impressive, the commission members were responsive.

Changes in the attitude of the commission is a result of several new members since 2002, including Barbara Binder, Ross Cheit, James Segovis and Frederick Butler and a strong new Chairman, James Lynch, who is leading the group to demand high ethical standards of our elected and appointed officials.



OCG legal team before the Ethics Commission August 2, 2002: from left, Teresa Quinn, Sara Quinn, Rob Senville, David Clarke, Lee Blais

Alert OCG activists force state reforms on many fronts

It's amazing how many ways there are for state officials to short change the citizens with behind the scene maneuvers:

Financial disclosure: In 2001, with non-compliance of financial disclosure of elected officials running at a rate of 36 percent, OCG filed 46 ethics complaints. Today, the rate of noncompliance is down to 2 or 3 percent.

Selling influence: In 2003 and 2004, complaints were filed against former Senator John Celona, Chairman of the Senate Corporations Committee, for influencing legislation that affected CVS, BC/BS and Roger Williams Hospital, with whom he had business ties. The Ethics Commission fined Celona \$130,000.

Ethics questions: A complaint was filed against Senate President Williams Irons in 2004. He immediately resigned from the Senate and a trial is being prepared.

Senate President Joseph Montalbano failed to report on his financial disclosure form that he was employed by the town of West Warwick for legal work, while also supporting and voting on the senate floor for the Casino Referendum Question. The Ethics Commission plans to investigate further.

Opening records: In 2001 OCG won its appeal before the Supreme Court for the *Commission on Judicial Tenure and Discipline* to make public the transcript for their hearing involving Judge John Lallo's misconduct at the traffic court.

Cover-up uncovered: OCG filed a brief in 2001 with the Supreme Court which led to the House withdrawal of their Advisory Opinion request concerning Speaker Harwood's violation of ethics regulations by representing clients before state agencies.

Pay Plan Board dissolved: The Unclassified Pay Plan Board was dissolved in 2005 after years of monitoring and criticism by OCG.

Promoting citizens' rights

Separation of Powers: OCG was one of the key supporters and promoters of the successful drive to amend the constitution for separation of powers. The group sponsored numerous local public meetings, testi-

fied at the State House, and distributed thousands of newspaper inserts that made the issue better understood.

Constitutional Convention ballot question: OCG's drive for a convention failed to pass by two percentage points against the unified efforts of the legislature, local unions and Common Cause.

Voter Initiative: OCG has promoted Voter Initiative since 1994. In 2005 OCG helped create a new organization called The Voter Initiative Alliance which obtained 21,000 citizen signatures to present to the General Assembly, asking for a ballot question on Voter Initiative. The bills were again killed in committee. OCG remains undaunted by such actions.

Tough-minded leaders urge RI citizens to join OCG now

OCG's only motive is to insist on good, honest government



Robert G. Flanders, Jr., former Rhode Island Supreme Court Justice

I have been greatly impressed by the quality and integrity of the people who give so much of themselves for the important work of OCG. Their only motive is to insist on good, honest government for Rhode Island and to shine a spotlight on anyone or thing that strays from that indispensable goal.

This is one citizen's group that does its homework

Operation Clean Government has consistently kept politicians' feet to the fire. The well-researched positions have been vindicated time and again.



Arlene Violet, WHJJ talk show host and former state Attorney General

This is one citizen's group that does its homework and its many victories on behalf of good government have given OCG a well-deserved credibility. Anyone who cares about RI should join this team of citizens who are the very heartbeat of the good things about this State.

OCG truly represents the best interests of all Rhode Islanders



Sen. Marc A. Cote, Democrat D-24, Woonsocket-North Smithfield and sponsor of Voter Initiative legislation since 1995

Since 1993, Operation Clean Government has been an invaluable resource to me and to all reform-minded legislators in the General Assembly, and has done so in a professional and non-partisan manner. Operation Clean Government has clearly demonstrated that it truly represents the best interests of all Rhode Islanders.

There's no doubt we'd all be living in a worse RI without OCG

Rhode Islanders should be grateful we have Operation Clean Government volunteers watching out for our interests on Smith Hill.



While our General Assembly leaders should have the interest of all Rhode Islanders in mind, it is too often the "insiders" that get all the attention. On important matters like Voter Initiative, we are continually kicked to the curb.

There's no doubt we'd all be living in a worse Rhode Island without Operation Clean Government. I hope you'll join me as a proud member and support this worthwhile group.

Thomas V. Ward, Publisher/Owner The Valley Breeze, The Valley Breeze & Observer The North Providence Breeze

OCG is the best tool for real change in government

This is especially true since so many government systems fail in their stewardship responsibility to serve the public interest. I believe that OCG has stirred such government mechanisms and compelled them to accept their stewardship responsibilities at critical moments of government failure in this state.



For democracy to be effective, citizens must assume the challenge to directly participate. OCG offers each citizen this opportunity to voice his concerns and to hold government accountable

Sara Quinn, former Executive Director of the Ethics Commission

OCG has very strong arms, keep paddling

People often ask me if I enjoy my work here in Rhode Island. My answer always is, "Of course. It is quite fertile ground."



Dan Yorke, WPRO Talk Show Host

Isn't the same true for OCG? Every time you turn around there is another story that confirms the good government learning disability that pervades in this state. So I see OCG as a kind of good government special education provider. At times it seems like paddling upstream, but OCG has very strong arms. Keep paddling.

This determined band of ordinary Rhode Islanders has accomplished the extraordinary



Dave Layman, former Providence TV news anchor and news director; and Channel 36 Political commentator

British statesman Edmund Burke had it right over two centuries ago when he said all that's needed for evil to succeed is for the good people to stand by and do nothing. Operation Clean Government has been answering that challenge since it began in 1993 demanding honest and responsible government in Rhode Island. This determined band of ordinary Rhode Islanders has accomplished the extraordinary in battling corruption and unnecessary government secrecy.

Sometimes you have to leave the state and come back, as I did, to fully appreciate OCG's tremendous achievements. But as Edmund Burke would remind us--it's not just their job, it's our job. There is much to be done.

OCG has sought to improve the system

It's one thing to criticize and another to try to change the system. Operation Clean Government has not only trained the spotlight on aspects of government that are not in the best interests of Rhode Islanders, but through programs such as its candidates school, filing of complaints and TV programs have sought to improve the system. We are fortunate to have both a watchdog and an activist in OCG.



John Howell, Publisher and Managing Editor of Beacon Communications

Visit www.ocgri.org and subscribe to OCG's Email Alerts

Here's where we ask you to join OCG. If you don't mind living in a one-party state dominated by 'special interests' you can skip this part. . .or. . ?

Had enough? You CAN help change Rhode Island – join OCG

Operation Clean Government has, since 1993, had a simple, straight-forward agenda: to promote honest, responsible and responsive state government. If you have read the contents of this paper you have learned a little about the good work this all-volunteer group is doing. Every penny of your membership goes to fighting corruption and to working to reform state government. With your help we can change Rhode Island government.

OCG MEMBERSHIP FORM

YES, I want to join other Rhode Island citizens and help to promote Honest, Responsible and Responsive State Government.

- New member Renewal
- \$25 Individual \$35 Family (list all names to be included) \$50 \$100 \$250 \$_____ Other

Name(s) _____ Home Phone _____
 _____ Business Phone _____
 Street _____ Email Address _____
 City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

OCG is a non-profit organization, however contributions are not tax deductible because our activities include lobbying.
 Yes, I would like to volunteer some time or participate on one or more of the OCG committees. Please call me.

I heard about OCG from _____ September/October 2006

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