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**CCM publishes second report in its “Election Campaign 2014” series,
Major Issues in Financing PreK-12 Public Education:
Achieving a Balanced Local-State Relationship**

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) today (Monday, September 22) released the second report of CCM’s “Election Campaign 2014” series -- Major Issues in Financing PreK-12 Public Education: Achieving a Balanced Local-State Partnership -- which concludes, among other key findings, **(1) that Connecticut remains the most reliant state in the nation on the property tax to fund preK-12 public education; and (2) that a range of actions are needed by the State to correct more than a \$600 million shortfall in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant and to address skyrocketing special education costs -- in order to reduce the excessive burden on property taxes.**

CCM’s “Election Campaign 2014” series is designed to educate and influence state legislative candidates and candidates for CT’s U.S. Representative on the key state-local issues affecting Connecticut local governments.

This new CCM report *assesses, in detail, the major issues in the state-local partnership that are advancing and hindering the adequate financing of local public education across the 169 towns and cities; and discusses the adequacy of state policies now in place -- as well as those proposed -- that are designed to sufficiently meet the education finance needs of our local public schools.*

“The quality of Connecticut’s educated workforce is one of the key assets in attracting and retaining businesses,” said Matthew Galligan, Town Manager of South Windsor and CCM President. “A first-rate education system -- and education finance system -- is vital for Connecticut’s prosperity and quality of life.

“State law limits municipalities primarily to the property tax for own-source revenue, and when municipalities do not receive adequate state education aid, they are forced to raise property taxes, cut other vital services, or both,” Galligan noted. “Local property taxes cannot continue to shoulder the lion’s share of preK-12 public education costs.”

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“In order for Connecticut to compete economically with its neighbors and the world, the State must increase and sustain its financial commitment to PreK-12 public education.” noted Ron Thomas, CCM Director of Public Policy and Advocacy. “For 40 years, court case after court case has ordered the State to do so in order to meet state Constitutional requirements. Some progress has been made, but much more needs to be done.”

Some key findings from the CCM report about PreK-12 public education financing in Connecticut include:

- CT towns and cities are responsible for funding the majority of preK-12 education. That means that, given the current tax structure, **Connecticut is the most reliant state in the nation on the property tax to fund PreK-12 public education.**
- The cost for public education in our state for the **current school year is over \$10 billion:**
- The ECS grant, in its current form is currently **underfunded by more than \$600 million.**
- CT Property taxpayers fund 51.5 percent of that amount (more than \$5 billion). The State contributes an estimated 42.9 percent and the federal government 5.2 percent.
- CT property taxpayers pay about **\$0.59 of every \$1.00 raised in property taxes toward preK-12 public education.**
- CT property taxpayers pay for about **60 percent of Connecticut’s \$1.8 billion in special-education costs.**
- CT property taxpayers pick-up the bill for numerous other state-mandated education priorities that are not fully funded by the State.

See pg. 18 of the report for all specific recommendations that CCM is pressing for. For example:

Correct state underfunding of regular education programs by:

- *Increasing the ECS foundation level to reflect the real cost of adequately educating students tied to a statutorily identified cost index;*
- *Restoring a factor for English Language Learners in the ECS formula and increasing the weighting for poverty; and*
- *Increasing the Wealth Adjustment Factor (WAF) multiplier in the ECS formula to increase the State’s share of education funding; Committing to phasing-in full funding of the ECS grant on an expedited schedule.*

Correct state underfunding of special education programs by:

- *In lieu of a complete State takeover of special education delivery, decreasing the Excess Cost grant threshold to at most 2.5 times the district’s average per-pupil expenditure;*
- *Paying 100 percent of marginal costs for severe-needs students, statewide without equalization; and*
- *Shifting the burden of proof to the plaintiff in due process hearings.*

Reduce the cost burden of costly unfunded and underfunded state education mandates by:

- *Reviewing the continued appropriateness of such mandates and modifying or eliminating them as needed; and*
- *Stop using the MBR to make up for chronic state underfunding.*

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Meet the statewide need for school construction and renovation by:

- *Maintaining the State's unparalleled funding commitment to ensure that aging schools are renovated and replaced to meet enrollment needs and higher technology and quality standards.*

As the 2014 campaign season continues to unfold, CCM will issue a range of public policy candidate bulletins highlighting key state-local issues for candidates to address in the thick of the election battle. The bulletins are relied upon by incumbent lawmakers and challengers alike, municipal chief executives, and other state and federal leaders and are designed to educate policy-makers on solutions to key state and local issues.

Here are the other major issues CCM will analyze and provide key information on to educate state legislators, state officials, federal office seekers, local leaders, and the general public:

- **Property Taxes in Connecticut (published Sept. 9)**
- **Unfunded State Mandates**
- **Infrastructure and Transportation Reform**
- **The State of CT's Distressed Municipalities**

In addition to these important issue reports, CCM will also undertake a series of other actions to get information to and from the candidates:

- A comprehensive federal questionnaire to all candidates for U.S. Representative -- with the candidates' responses on key local issues -- will be published online, in key conference publications, and provided to all Connecticut news media;
- A "2014 Election Campaign" page will be established on our website, consisting of contact information and other information regarding fall elections; and
- Municipal chief executive officials will be provided with a sample list of questions to ask candidates for state office.