



CITY OF HARTFORD

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRARS OF VOTERS

550 Main Street

Hartford, CT 06103

(860) 543-8585 Fax: (860) 722-6331

TDD: (860) 722-6321

www.hartford.gov

Democratic Registrar
Shirley A. Surgeon

Republican Registrar
Joseph W. DeLorenzo

February 28, 2007

Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso, and members of the GAE Committee:

My name is Shirley Surgeon and I am the Democratic Registrar of Voters for the city of Hartford and I come to speak in favor of House Bill 6251, An Act Authorizing Election Day Registration.

As an urban Registrar I am particularly concerned over our low voter turnout in our cities and I am in favor of all responsible means to increase the voter participation. For example, in the 2004 Presidential election only 58.20% of our voting age population in Hartford voted as compared to a state-wide figure of 65.6%. During the 2006 state elections only 38% voted. Turnout in other Connecticut cities show similar results.

Connecticut's current voter registration deadline (7 days before the election) occurs prior to the greatest concentration of media advertising by candidates and in many cases the bulk of individual candidates campaigning. Many citizens just become interested in a specific campaign to find voter registration closed to them.

The experience in the six (6) states with Election Day Registration has consistently seen better turnout.

House Bill 6251 provides additional safeguards, requiring the Registrars of Voters to verify the voting status of the person on the state-wide voter data base system before issuing a notice of acceptance.

I am hardly suggesting that Election Day Registration is the panacea for all turnout issues; however as a Registrar my primary responsibility is to encourage all citizens to registrar and vote. Nonetheless, it is one piece of a process of improving civic involvement, an important step in this time of national challenges.

Thank you for your time.