

Government Administration and Elections Committee
Room 2200 Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06160

March 11, 2008

Dear Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso, and fellow Government Administrations and Elections Committee Members,

Re: Raised Bill No. 680

For the record my name is Susan Spang and I am Registrar of Voters in the Town of Salem. I would like to thank you for raising Bill # 680 concerning property owners with assessed value of \$1000 or over voting in town referendum.

In my capacity as Registrar of Voters I participated in a referendum in 2007 for a capital expense. Unlike past referendum we had an unusually high number of eligible non-residents, non electors, voting in the referendum. Most had property assessed at \$7000-\$9000. This particular referendum generated strong feelings on both sides of the issue. As it turned out the voters who were not electors made the difference in passing this particular referendum. As you can imagine a number of residents were not happy with the outcome, as it concerned a substantial purchase.

I contacted Representative Jutila about this issue. He and his staff emailed me a legislative report which stated this bill and specifically the assessed amount of \$1000 had not been changed since 1955. The report also compared our state to neighboring states, some of which do not let people who are not electors of the town to vote in referendums. It appeared to me that this was a bill that needed some serious updating.

The Town of Salem's Board of Selectman put the issue on their agenda and voted to request Representative Jutila submit a bill asking that this amount be raised, an amount was not specified.

You now have a bill before you to consider, I would like to add my support for this bill and ask you to contemplate raising the amount of \$7000 to the \$25,000 which is in raised bill #442 in front of the Committee on Planning and Development. I would also ask that a possible trigger for increasing this amount be added so we will not be looking at the same situation years down the road.

I believe it is important to pass a bill with an amount that is fair to property owners who are not electors but are impacted by local taxes. The amount should be substantial enough that the non resident takes their vote seriously and not be as easily manipulated by special interest groups in the Town. As the law presently functions, almost any non-resident, non-electors, property owner has equal voting power with a resident property owner, who shoulders a much higher tax burden in the town. If the amount is not substantial enough to satisfy some of the stated concerns you could still have a situation where the will of the electors, therefore, residents of the town who have a vital interest in their town, could possibly be in the minority of a vote due to organization of non residents.

Having said that, I believe raising the amount is a good start. I have to question if the issue may need a larger debate in the future. I want to express my heart felt thanks to you for

discussing the issue and more importantly, giving a "common" citizen like myself the time and attention I believe this issue deserves.

Respectfully,

Susan Spang,
Registrar of Voters
Salem