



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
JAMES A. AMANN

Government Administration and Elections Committee PUBLIC HEARING

February 29, 2008

Testimony by House Speaker James Amann
in SUPPORT of

HOUSE BILL NO. 5659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECURITY OF CHILDREN
AT POLLING LOCATIONS

H.B. 5659 would allow registrars of voters in consultation with school principals to request police presence on an election day if they believe children's safety is at risk. It also requires that Boards of Education prepare a security plan that addresses the potential safety risks to its school and students on election days.

Representative Caruso, Senator Slossberg, and members of the committee:

I would like to express my strong support for **House Bill No. 5659, An Act Concerning The Security Of Children At Polling Locations**. The safety of children at polling places on elections days was first brought to my attention by a constituent from the City of Milford, William "Skip" Ziebell. Skip was an election moderator at the polling place that I voted at for the presidential primary election on February 5, 2008. Several days before the election Skip visited J.F.K. Elementary School in Milford to begin to prepare for Election Day. At this time he recognized a potential problem with the security of children because the voting would take place in close proximity to the school children and their classrooms. A voter could easily wander off and interact with the students. Skip believed that children were at greater risk of harm than on non-elections days. Because of this he petitioned the Board of Alderman, and as a result a Milford police officer was stationed at the polling location to ensure safety.

House Bill 5659 will allow the registrars of voters in a municipality in consultation with the principal of the school to request police presence if they believe that children's safety is at risk because of the election. I understand that police presence at every school in the State for every election is not feasible and can be very expensive. I believe in most schools extra precautions are taken to ensure the election does not interfere with safety. However, schools were not designed to be polling places and there are circumstances as

in the case cited by my constituent in where voting compromises the student's safety. These cases, under this bill, a police officer will be present.

The bill also asks Boards of Educations to prepare a security plan that addresses the potential safety risks to its schools and students on election days. The plans should include parking producers, designated ingress and egress locations, emergency communications systems and security personal protocols.

Although, there are no records of a child being harmed in a school on an election day, there is a greater potential threat on these days. On normal school days, schools are effectively secured. We need to make sure that parents do not have to worry that there are days where security is compromised. In the last several years there have been several school shootings around the country. Connecticut has been fortunate not to have had one of these horrific incidents. However, we must do everything possible to prevent them. This bill helps make sure that on a day where there are hundreds, if not thousands of people entering a school, those children are as safe as any other school day.

Thank you for your time and consideration in support of H.B. 5659. I look forward to working with the committee members as the process moves forward.

College Democrats of Connecticut

Testimony to the Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 29, 2008

Hello, my name is David Steuber and I am the President of the College Democrats of Connecticut. On behalf of both the College Democrats and myself, I would like to express our organization's support for HJ21. We believe that it is very important to encourage youth and student participation in the political process, and we feel that this amendment is a fantastic measure that helps achieve these laudable aims.

The involvement of citizens in the political process is a key component of any democratic society, and as such our country, our state, and our local communities all have a vested interest in promoting ever higher levels of voter participation. Voting is a fantastic habit for citizens of all ages to fall into, and by expanding the right of young citizens to vote, our state will be encouraging young people to begin a lifetime of civic involvement. Eighteen-year-olds already have the right to vote in our general elections, it only makes sense that those very same voters should also have the right to vote in our related primaries.

I am well aware that some individuals have concerns about the maturity of our seventeen-year-old citizens, and wonder if those citizens might be able to handle the responsibility of casting a ballot. To anyone who asks these questions, consider this: our country is at war, and it is young people that bear the largest part of this burden. Our federal government is running massive deficits, and it is our generation that will have to pay for them. There are so many important issues that face our state and nation today, and the decisions we make now will have consequences that continue to impact our society for decades to come. Young people are well aware of these things (as you can see by the large number of us here today) and we take our responsibilities on these matters very seriously.

I can speak with some authority on this kind of amendment, because I have personally been a beneficiary of a similar provision. I went to high school in Ohio, where for a few years now there has been a similar law on the books. As a seventeen-year-old high school student, I was privileged to be able to cast my vote in the 2004 presidential primaries. It was extremely exciting to be voting for the first time, and the experience truly set me on a path for future political involvement; I haven't missed an opportunity to cast my ballot since. The experience of having begun to vote regularly from a young age has been invaluable for me, and I fully anticipate continuing in this habit for the rest of my life. I know that this will soon be true of many other Connecticut voters as well.

The twenty-sixth amendment to the US Constitution was ratified in 1971, guaranteeing suffrage to all eighteen-year-old citizens. Connecticut, in fact, was the very first state in the union to ratify that amendment. With HJ21, Connecticut is once again leading the nation in expanding suffrage to young people who are so dramatically affected by the issues confronting our nation today. On behalf of the College Democrats of Connecticut, I would like to once again express my strong support for HJ21, and I would encourage everyone else here today to do the same.