

# *Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.*

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## *2008 Legislative Committee*

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Written Testimony of

Patricia Strauss, Legislative Vice-Chair (Town of Westport)  
Connecticut Town Clerks Association

Friday, February 29, 2008

General Assembly's Government Administration and Elections Committee

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee (GAE), my name is Patricia Strauss and I am testifying on behalf of the Connecticut Town Clerks Association (CTCA). I am the Vice-Chair of our Legislative Committee and the Town Clerk of Westport. I am here today to testify about the following bills relating to elections.

### **House Bill 5665 An Act Concerning Changes to the Conduct of Elections and Certain Compensation of Registrars of Voters.**

Several sections in this bill eliminate the requirement of the Registrars of Voters to provide Town Clerks with a copy of the active (Section 9) and the inactive (Section 24) voter registry lists. The changes state that these copies will be available in the ROV offices for public use. We oppose these changes since we are required to begin issuing absentee ballots 31 days before an election and it is necessary to have a current voters list to perform our absentee ballot duties. We sincerely hope these sections are removed.

We support a ROVAC amendment to Section 21 that will remove town clerks and assistant town clerks from the term "admitting officials" in the voter registration process. Town clerks have never used this title and current practice shows that voter registration is clearly a function of the Registrars of Voters. We wish to clarify this throughout all of the election laws.

We support Section 23, which will allow permanently disabled persons to apply onetime for an absentee ballot. This idea is also raised in **Senate Bill 445 An Act Concerning Permanent Absentee Ballot Status**. We appreciate the idea of presenting a physicians certificate to qualify for a lifetime absentee ballot status and we have agreed that a combined meeting with the Secretary of the State and the Registrars of Voters is necessary to clarify procedures regarding the responsibility of clerks maintaining confidential files for physician certificates and thus protecting the medical privacy of the applicant. We are also concerned of possibly issuing a ballot to a person who is deceased or has become comatose since the last election, possibly

contributing to a potential increase of voter fraud in the absentee ballot area of the election process.

**Senate Bill 444 An Act Concerning Certain Revisions and Technical Changes to the Election Laws.**

Our association supports all technical changes that clarify the process to implement election laws. We are pleased to support Section 2, which allows the ballot to indicate how many candidates the elector may vote for, including ‘vote for one.’ We also support blackened names on vacancy positions of printed ballots; however, we question the use of stickers to add a replacement name and suggest the vendor might be asked to weigh in if the placement of stickers on a ballot could affect the ability of the tabulator to read the ballot.

We also support the SOTS bill concerning voting privacy.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.