



February 18, 2009

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS

Testimony in support of Bill #6435, AAC Election Day Registration

Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, members of the committee:

I am Melissa Russell, a member of ROVAC and a Registrar of Voters in Bethlehem. I am here today to speak in support of the concept of Bill #6435, An Act Concerning Election Day Registration, but with a suggested amendment.

Election Day Registration has long been a controversial issue for Registrars in Connecticut. While many of us understand that increasing participation in elections by making it easier and more convenient for the voter to cast their ballot is an important aspect of our electoral process, many of us are also concerned about the integrity of that process and our need to ensure that only those who are eligible to cast their ballot are the ones who are actually doing so.

Therefore, after much debate within our Legislative Committee and with other members of ROVAC, we believe we have come up with a compromise that will address the concerns of both sides of this issue, as well as providing some added advantages to the voter and the municipality.

Our proposal is this: That the newly registered voter be given a special EDR Provisional Ballot, which they fill out in a Privacy Booth in an area designated by the Registrar. That ballot is then placed in a secure location, also designated by the Registrar. The Registrar then proceeds to mail out the registration confirmation notice to the new voter's stated address. If any notice comes back from the post office as undeliverable within six days, that person's ballot is not counted. On the sixth day, the Registrar calls in the Head Moderator to add all the other EDR Provisional votes to the Moderator's return and then submit the revised Moderator's return to the Secretary of the state's office.

In this way, not only does the voter get to participate in the election on the day he or she registers to vote, the Registrar's office gets a chance to validate that person's residential status, thus preserving the integrity of the election. Another advantage that our proposal entails is that the voter does not have to make more than one trip to vote. They can register and vote in the same place, rather than registering in the Registrars' office and then possibly travelling to a

polling location that may not be nearby. And a further advantage to implementing our proposal is the fact that in a Presidential election year, EDR will ensure that there are far fewer Presidential Ballots issued, thus saving the municipalities a considerable sum of money.

Many Registrars who have previously opposed EDR find this to be a satisfactory method of implementing it, and it is my hope that this committee will give our proposal serious consideration.

Thank you for taking my testimony, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.