



Testimony on behalf of the Registrar of Voters Association of Connecticut to the COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS February 18, 2009, Hartford, CT

Senator SLOSSBERG, REPRESENTATIVE, Spallone, and members of the GAE committee

My name is David Wawer, Registrar of Voters in Enfield. I am here today to testify on Senate Bills 909 and 917; and House Bills 6440, 6435, and 6441. First of all, we ask for your committee's support for the technical changes proposed in Senate Bill 909. It is important to bring current election law language up-to-date to reflect the changes that have already been implemented through adoption of the optical scan voting system. We also seek your support for adoption of enhanced training for Registrars and other election officials as proposed in Senate Bill 917. The key to continued successful election management outcomes is training, coordinated through the Secretary of the State's Office, especially for new elections officials.

We also support the good government efficiency legislative proposal from the Secretary of the State, House Bill 6440. The Secretary and her staff have incorporated many positive changes for elections management after surveying local elections officials. The streamlining of voting procedures is very important for voters and local taxpayers, especially now that the optical scan system has proven to be a great success.

There are several legislative proposals before this committee that do not embody the concept of good government, but rather call into question the very basis of today's voting system. These proposals, as written, will increase costs to local taxpayers for voting management operations, without any corresponding increase in voter value. I am speaking of House Bills 6435 and 6441. In these very difficult economic times, when state and local governments are looking at the need for significant cost-reductions in order to balance budgets, initiatives such as 6435 and 6441 have the exact opposite effect. We can debate the details, but the fact remains that requiring a city or town to construct a vault, as proposed in 6441 is neither cost effective nor practical. As written, this unfunded mandate would cost our community \$1 million or greater in order to design and construct an addition to the Town Hall. Plus, there are the mandatory environmental impact statements, which are unfunded state-mandated requirements for any municipal construction project.

We look forward to working with the committee in the development of positive and cost-effective enhancements to the State's optical scan voting system and state election law requirements during the coming weeks. ROVAC offers its professional and technical resources to the committee to insure that final proposals incorporate critical knowledge and information necessary to improve local elections management without adding any further unfunded mandates to cities and towns.