



March 1, 2010

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill No. 287

AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSIBLE VOTING FOR VOTERS WITH
DISABILITIES OR NEEDING ASSISTANCE.

Good morning, Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, and members of the GAE Committee. I'm Carole Young-Kleinfeld, one of Wilton's registrars of voters, and a spokesperson for the Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut—or ROVAC.

ROVAC is the professional association of Connecticut's registrars of voters. It includes the registrars of both major political parties throughout the state and, in the City of Hartford, the registrars of three political parties. Although the registrars may occasionally disagree among themselves on proposed legislation, we are unified in our goal to uphold the rights of voters and the integrity of elections, especially when we consider new legislative proposals and changes to existing statutes.

In accordance with our organization's goal, ROVAC supports Senate Bill No. 287—AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSIBLE VOTING FOR VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES OR NEEDING ASSISTANCE.

First, we believe that Section 2 is especially important. Like current state law, this section of the bill preserves a voter's right to request voting assistance from anyone—friends, family members, other voters—except for certain designated groups of persons. In addition to prohibiting an elector's employer, an agent of the employer, or an officer or agent of the elector's union from helping, this bill would also prohibit a candidate for any office on the ballot from assisting an elector in completing a ballot.

ROVAC wholeheartedly supports this addition in order to safeguard a voter's right to privacy in casting a ballot and to protect vulnerable voters against undue influence, intimidation, or even blatant misrepresentation of voter intent. ROVAC assures the Committee that there are an adequate number of elections officials trained to assist voters at the polls and sworn to be non-partisan in performance of their Election Day duties.

Second, we support the intent of Section 1—to get the accessible voting machines tested and the polling place ready by the evening before an election. However, we believe that a 6 pm deadline may be unrealistic for many towns, because registrars may not be able even to gain access to polling places until late afternoon when after-school activities are finished. Also, our optical scanning tabulator voting machines cannot, and should not, be left set up in place, unsecured overnight. We suggest amending this section with either a more general wording or a later deadline in the evening before Election Day for testing and setting up accessible voting machines. We believe that the 6 pm deadline, referred to in Section 9-247 of CT's General Statutes, is a holdover from previous years when voting machine mechanics could roll out lever machines, including those that were the wheelchair-accessible, complete with ballot labels, by 6 pm and leave them until the next morning.

Provided that a change is made to Section 1 as suggested, we would urge you to act favorably on Senate Bill 287, which protects the right of a voter to cast a vote in confidence and secrecy, free from intimidation and undue influence.

Thank you for your consideration.

Carole Young-Kleinfeld, Registrar of Voters, Wilton
For ROVAC