



GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 14, 2011

Testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 939, AAC Elections Related Statutes

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

Good morning, my name is Melissa Russell, and I am a Registrar of Voters in Bethlehem, Executive Vice President of ROVAC, and the co-chair of ROVAC's Legislative Committee. I want to thank you for holding this hearing today.

I am submitting testimony today in favor of Raised Bill No. 939, AAC Elections Related Statutes. This is a rather large and technical bill, which covers many small changes to our elections laws. While the changes proposed may seem minor, they are in fact the very foundation stones on which we build our elections processes.

2011 will be the fourth year that the members of ROVAC have supported the language in this bill, in order to bring elections statutes in line with our current practice. The elimination of lever machine language, the streamlining of printed registry lists, the correct identification of election workers, and the use of the term "ballot" are all included in this bill.

In addition, we strongly support the language that solves the problem of how to attribute a party vote, when a voter fills in two ovals for a cross endorsed candidate. In the new language, the tabulator would be programmed to see this as an overvote, and would reject the ballot. The voter would then have a chance to fill out a new ballot, and vote for their candidate on one line only. In this way, the voter chooses the party he wants to endorse, rather than the current practice, where the head moderator, at the end of the night, simply assigns those "unknown" party votes to any party, without regard to the voters' intent.

We also strongly support the language in this bill that will help cut down the number of duplicate voters found on our statewide registry lists. In the new language, when a voter moves from one town to another within the state, it is incumbent upon the Registrar in the voter's new town to determine the status of the voter in their old town, and pull that information if necessary, to remove them from the previous town's registry list. This will give Registrars the tools they need to preserve a voter's history on the statewide computer registry system, and prevent a duplicate registration from being created.

There is one change we'd like to see in this bill, and that is in Section 3; Sec 9-6, line 109. We would like to see the phrase, "at the rate of thirty-five dollars per day" be eliminated, to read "Each such official shall be compensated by the municipality for attending each such conference..." ROVAC works very hard in conjunction with the Secretary of the State's office to provide our members with extensive training and education at the two conferences we hold each year. It is unfortunate that some Registrars are unable to avail themselves of the entire education program, because their municipality will only pay them thirty-five dollars for a whole day's education and training. What we are asking is that Registrars simply receive their normal day's pay during these days. We believe that this change will increase attendance at our conferences, and help to build a higher level of knowledge and professionalism among our members.

In my testimony submitted today, I've only touched on a very few issues that this bill will accomplish. For your convenience and elucidation, I've attached a sheet that goes into a little more detail about the many sections of this bill that ROVAC supports.

Thank you for your consideration on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.