



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

***TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION
AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE***

February 14, 2011

*Statement of Albert P. Lenge, Executive Director and General Counsel
State Elections Enforcement Commission*

The State Elections Enforcement Commission provides the following information concerning elections bills that are on the Committee's agenda today.

Senate Bill 938 AAC Technical and Minor Changes to Elections-Related Statutes

- The SEEC supports a global revision to the election administration statutes to address the use of optical scan machines. This will remove the vestiges of the lever voting machines left throughout the election statutes and provide clarity and consistency.

Senate Bill 939 AAC Election Related Statutes

- The SEEC favors Sec. 52 which amends section 9-247 and provides a remedy to ensure that the AVS vote-by-phone system is functioning properly at the opening of the polls, thereby ensuring that the voting systems are fully accessible to voters with disabilities without undue delay.

Senate Bill 941 AA Implementing No-Excuse Absentee Voting

Senate Joint Resolution No. 25 Resolution Amending the State Constitution to Allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting

- The SEEC opposes **Senate Bill 941 and SJR 25** which as drafted provides for no excuse absentee voting, as opposed to early voting. As to the substance of the early voting proposals, the Commission will work with the committee to accomplish the goal of providing more convenience and accessibility for voters while maintaining the security of polling place protections. However, due to a significant history of enforcement actions in the absentee ballot area, which lack the traditional controls of a polling place, the Commission opposes No-Excuse Absentee Voting.

Senate Bill 942 AAC the Integrity of Elections

- Our mission centers on the electoral process and to provide confidence to the people of Connecticut in enforcing laws pertaining to state and local elections, primaries and referenda. Senate Bill 942 is responsive to difficulties that occurred during the 2010 elections and we applaud the intent of this proposal. It is important to note that depending on where these changes will be codified in statute, language should be added to section 9-7b to provide authority to the SEEC to address violations.
- In Section 3 of Senate Bill 942, the Commission proposes an amendment to permit the Secretary of the State's field teams to monitor polling places, but believes that the Secretary of the State should not be permitted in a polling place when he or she is a candidate on the ballot.

Delete section 3 of Senate Bill 942 and substitute the following:

Sec. 3. (NEW) Section 9-236 shall be amended by adding subsection (d) as follows (*Effective from passage*):

The Secretary of the State, or the secretary's designee, shall be allowed access to each polling place within the state during any municipal, state or federal election or primary for the purpose of providing guidance and instruction concerning the requirements with state and federal law, except that when the Secretary of the State is a candidate in said election or primary, she shall not personally access a polling place, except for the purposes of casting her own ballot, and her designees in such election or primary shall be limited to civil service classified employees.

House Bill 5978 AAC Permanent Absentee Ballot Status for Disabled Voters

- The SEEC supports this concept.

House Bill 6335 AAC Revisions to Campaign Finance Laws

- Although House Bill 6335 is not a Commission proposal the language it contains resulted from a tremendous amount of work by both the Commission and the caucuses during the last few sessions. Some portions this bill came directly from the Commission based on its experience in administering the program, while other portions came directly from the caucuses reflecting the experiences of candidates and treasurers.
- This bill seeks to achieve a number of “fixes” to the Citizens’ Election Program and the Commission supports changes that will strengthen the landmark Program, however we would like to continue to work with the Committee to embody technical changes that will ensure that the language in the final bill will be consistent with the changes that were enacted by Public Act 10-1, July Special Session.
- The Commission opposes the section that eliminates candidate committee reporting of organization expenditures articulated in **§ 9-608 (c) (6) because it defeats transparency.**

We look forward to working with the Committee concerning technical changes and revisions. Thank you for your consideration of the Commission’s views on these bills.