



Testimony
Bart Russell, Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 14, 2011

RE: SB-942, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTION PROCESS

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) understands the need to support efforts to promote the integrity of our election process. Recognizing how vital the election process is to our democratic system of government, Connecticut's small towns have an excellent track record of compliance with the state's election laws.

We are also very concerned about imposing any additional mandates on Connecticut's small towns and cities during these difficult economic times and recommend the following revisions to **SB-942 to help reduce costs associated with compliance.**

Recognizing the importance of ensuring a smooth and secure election process, we understand the need to require a written emergency contingency plan. However, *the legislation should be amended to provide that in towns where the legislative body is the town meeting, the emergency plan should be approved by the board of selectmen.* This will reduce costs for our small towns and ensure that the plans are approved in a timely manner. Some towns have also suggested that the plan simply be filed with the town clerk's office rather than formally approved and we believe this option should be explored.

In addition, we are concerned that the model emergency contingency plan required to be prepared by the Secretary of State's Office to guide towns in preparing their plans will not be available until shortly before or after towns are required to submit their plan to the state. As drafted, the model plan would have to be developed in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, which is a lengthy process. *We therefore recommend that the bill be amended to require towns to prepare the plan within one year following the adoption of the model plan.*

Regarding the process for certifying the number of ballots each town orders, we certainly understand why this provision has been proposed. We do feel it is important to note, however, that the vast majority of towns have always ordered a sufficient number of ballots and the registrars, town clerks and moderators already do a wonderful job of ensuring the integrity of the election process. We look forward to working with the Secretary of State's Office to ensure that this provision is administered in the least burdensome way possible.