

GAE PUBLIC HEARING February 27, 2012

ROVAC TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL No. 212

An Act Concerning Provisional Ballots for State and Municipal Elections

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I am here in support of SB 212. Provisional ballots are used to prevent disenfranchising a voter that otherwise would not be able to vote while allowing the Registrars of Voters the time to verify the validity of the voter's right to vote.

Provisional ballots have been the responsibility of the Town Clerks. This made the most sense because paper ballots were in the hands of the Town Clerks. Now with the electronic voting machines, paper ballots are used and therefore it seems logical that provisional ballots should also be the responsibility of the Registrars of Voters.

The use of the provisional ballot has been successful in Federal Elections and should be used in every election. Voters come to the polls in expectation that they will be able to vote. There are candidates they want to support and they are adamant that they should be able vote. That same commitment to voting is felt at the state and municipal elections. By allowing the voter the use of the provisional ballot, he/she feels the vote will count after verification. Voters walking away from the polls feeling positive is the goal of every election official.

The Registrars of Voters are able to verify the residency of a challenged voter. Whether the reason is clerical error or misunderstanding of the residency standard for voting, there is a mechanism for all election officials to verify a voter's right to vote in the municipality. In municipal elections, two or three votes can determine the outcome and turning voters away simply because they are not on the list when a mechanism exists to fully examine the reason the voter can't vote is wrong. We have a reasonable process to insure voter rights and election accuracy. We should employ it in all elections.

Thank you for allowing this testimony.

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