
OLR BILL ANALYSIS

sSB 27

AN ACT TRANSITIONING THE REGULATIONS OF CONNECTICUT STATE AGENCIES TO AN ONLINE FORMAT.

SUMMARY:

This bill requires that state agency regulations be posted online, rather than published in the *Connecticut Law Journal*, making them available to the public on the Office of the Secretary of the State's and regulating agency's Internet websites.

The bill requires the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary to seek the necessary licensing agreements to permit the online posting of regulations containing codes or standards for which a third party holds the intellectual property rights. It requires agencies to post online (1) their policy manuals and guidance documents and (2) policies that have been implemented while in the process of being adopted in regulation form.

Lastly, the bill creates an 11-member Regulation Modernization Task Force to develop an implementation plan for publishing regulations online.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013, except for the task force provision which is effective upon passage.

§§ 1 & 2—NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

Notice of Intent

By law, agencies may be authorized or required to adopt regulations. They must provide at least 30 days' notice of their intent to adopt proposed regulations. Agencies required to adopt regulations must provide the notice within five months after the passage of the act requiring adoption or by the time specified in the act.

The bill requires that the secretary of the state post the notice, rather

than the *Connecticut Law Journal* publish it. The secretary must post the notice and its accompanying documents on her office's website within five days after receiving them from the agency. Any agency that fails to post notice of intent to adopt required regulations within the specified periods must explain its reasons in an electronic, rather than written, statement to the governor and the Legislative Regulation Review Committee.

The bill requires agencies to post the notice and accompanying documents on their websites. They must also give electronic notice to the legislature's committees of cognizance for the regulation's subject matter. Additionally, the bill changes the date by which an agency must prepare a fiscal note regarding the regulations. The new date is the date the notice of intent is submitted to the secretary, rather than the date of publication in the *Connecticut Law Journal*.

The bill requires agencies, after deciding to proceed with a proposed regulation or alter its text, to post to its own website and submit to the secretary for posting on her office's website (1) the proposed regulation's final wording, (2) supporting reasons, and (3) opposing arguments and why they were rejected.

By law, agencies must provide electronic or paper copies of proposed regulations upon request. The bill permits anyone who requests it to continue to inspect paper copies of their regulations and policies. The bill prohibits agencies from charging a fee for electronic copies of the proposed regulation.

Other Notices

By law, an agency may propose, without prior notice, (1) technical amendments to regulations when necessary to conform to certain changes or (2) a repeal of a regulation if the authorizing statute is repealed. The bill requires the agency to post to its website any such proposed technical amendments or repeals.

§ 6—APPROVED REGULATIONS

Submission to the Secretary

Once regulations have been approved by the attorney general and the Legislative Regulation Review Committee, current law requires agencies to submit two certified paper copies of the approved regulations to the Office of the Secretary of the State. The bill instead requires agencies to submit one certified and one electronic copy to the secretary along with a statement from the department head certifying that the electronic version is a true and accurate copy of the approved regulation. The bill authorizes the secretary to adopt regulations specifying the format agencies must use to submit electronic regulations and documents.

Regulation Effective Date

Currently with some exceptions, regulations become effective when an agency files them with the secretary. Under the bill, regulations become effective when the secretary publishes them online, which she must do within five calendar days after the agency's filing, in a manner easily accessible to, and searchable by, the public. The bill specifies that emergency regulations are effective upon submission to the secretary. It deletes the requirement that, before becoming enforceable, agency regulations must be published in the *Connecticut Law Journal*.

The bill designates the online regulations published by the secretary as the "official version" of the regulations of state agencies for "all purposes, including all legal and administrative proceedings." It requires agencies to provide, if requested, paper copies of regulations and other written policy statements and agency forms and instructions.

§§ 6-8— PUBLISHED REGULATIONS

The bill removes:

1. the duties of the Commission on Official Legal Publications (COLP) to publish (a) the compilation of all adopted state agency regulations that it currently publishes with semiannual supplements and (b) a monthly update of approved regulations in the *Connecticut Law Journal*;

2. the provision for making published regulations available to state agencies and officials for free and to others for sale;
3. the requirement that published regulations be included in each state law library's reference collection; and
4. the ability to omit from the compilation emergency regulations and those that are too expensive or unduly cumbersome to publish.

The bill requires the secretary to publish the compilation of regulations online with website links to any other state or federal regulations adopted or incorporated by reference. She must also include in the compilation a website link, if available, to information about any omitted regulations. She must update the compilation at least quarterly.

Proprietary Regulations

Under current practice, non-state entities hold the intellectual property rights to several codes and standards that are incorporated by reference into state agency regulations (e.g., the State Building Code and the State Fire Safety Code). The bill requires the OPM secretary to seek one or more licensing agreements from the publishers of these codes and standards to permit them to be posted online by the secretary of the state.

§§ 9-12— AGENCY POLICIES

Policy Manuals and Guidance Documents

The bill requires any state agency that has written a manual or guidance document to post it on its website. It specifically requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to post to its website its medical services, public assistance, and community services manuals.

Policies Awaiting Adoption in Regulation Form

By law, DSS must adopt as regulations policies necessary to conform to certain federal or joint federal and state program requirements. The law allows DSS to operate under such policies while

in the process of adopting them in regulation form. The bill requires DSS to post the policies to its website and electronically submit them to the secretary of the state for online posting before implementing them. The bill retains current law's requirement that notices of intent to adopt these policies as regulations appear in the *Connecticut Law Journal*.

The bill also extends the online posting requirement to all agencies that adopt interim policies or procedures while such policies or procedures are in the process of being adopted in regulation form. The bill prohibits such policies or procedures from being effective unless the agency (1) posts them on its website, (2) electronically submits them to the secretary for posting online, and (3) complies with the authorizing statute's other requirements, if applicable. Such policies or procedures in effect on July 1, 2013 must be posted on the agency's website and submitted to the secretary by October 1, 2013. There is no deadline for the secretary to post them. When the superseding regulations take effect, the agency must notify the secretary, who must then remove the policy or procedure from the secretary's website.

§ 15—REGULATION MODERNIZATION TASK FORCE

The bill establishes an 11-member gubernatorial-appointed task force to develop a plan that ensures, by July 1, 2013, that Connecticut state agency regulations are available to the public in an accessible online format. The governor must (1) make the appointments within 30 days of the bill's passage, (2) select the chairperson, and (3) fill any vacancy. It requires the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to provide administrative staff support.

By January 1, 2013, the task force must submit a plan to the governor and the Legislative Regulation Review Committee that ensures state agency regulations are easily accessible to the public in an online format by July 1, 2013. The task force terminates on January 1, 2013 or when it submits its plan, whichever is later.

The bill requires the plan to:

1. identify the hardware and software needed to transfer regulations to an online format;
2. recommend the appropriate state agency to supervise maintenance of the online system;
3. describe the necessary staff training for using and maintaining the system;
4. describe the amount of additional work and responsibilities required to create and maintain the system;
5. describe the reduction in workload and costs that are anticipated with the system;
6. estimate the cost to implement and maintain the system, with recommendations on how the state can recover it; and
7. recommend additional legislation that may be necessary to facilitate the transition to publishing regulations in an online format.

The bill authorizes the task force to request bond funds through DAS to pay a consultant for advice on the technical aspects of implementing and maintaining an online system for regulations. The Legislative Commissioners' Office, COLP, and all executive branch agencies must cooperate and provide information the task force needs.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 15 Nay 0 (03/12/2012)