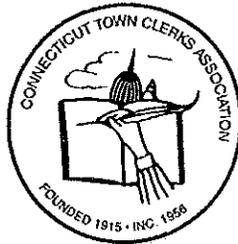


Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.



TESTIMONY

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE Monday, February 25, 2013

HJ 36 – Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Grant Increased Authority to the General Assembly Regarding Election Administration.

Good afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Jutila, Senator McLachlan, Representative Hwang and distinguished members of the GAE Committee. My name is Antoinette C. Spinelli and I am the Town Clerk in Waterbury and the Chair of the Legislative Committee for the Connecticut Town Clerk's Association.

I am here today to testify in support of *House Joint 36 – Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Grant Increased Authority to the General Assembly Regarding Election Administration.*

Our Association continues to support election reform that would offer less restrictive voting for Connecticut residents and welcomes the opportunity to participate in the formulation of a well thought out, cost effective plan that includes safeguards and minimizes disenfranchisement.

Following the approval of this resolution and subsequent ballot question, the Town Clerks Association cautions against legislation that would expand vote by mail opportunities to include an all mail or no excuse absentee ballot option. Our Association would support alternatives such as early voting using a tabulator at a designated polling place as long as the proper security procedures and standards are in place.

Our Association has done extensive research on the absentee ballot process and found that in last November's election a large number of towns reported that absentee ballots were not counted or arrived after Election Day. On **average 5-percent** of the absentee ballots were not counted with some towns reporting the rejection of 7 or 8-percent. Absentee ballots are rejected for various reasons. For example, the absentee ballot was received late (after 8:00pm on Election Day), the ballot was not signed, the ballot was missing the inner envelope or missing a ballot, the ballot was not properly delivered. It would stand to reason that if you expand the absentee ballot process to every voter in Connecticut, the number of disenfranchised voters would rise significantly.

Also, under a "no excuse" option, the possibility of fraud is a serious concern. Our Association has had numerous discussions with the State Election Enforcement Commission and we have come to the conclusion that most of the fraud complaints filed are not because of something that happened at a polling place, but rather with something that may have happened with an absentee ballot.

In addition, the majority of absentee ballots now are issued and returned by mail. The elimination of Saturday delivery beginning in August 2013 could prove to be a factor both in sending and receiving ballots in a timely manner.

The Association does recognize a need to expand the existing categories of those eligible to vote by absentee ballot to include caregivers and emergency relief workers. Also, we welcome the opportunity to participate in discussions to develop procedures that would expand the on-line voting option for our military personnel.

The Town Clerks are very interested in the elections process and are eager to be part of the discussions regarding voter participation in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, I would be glad to answer any questions at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Antoinette C. Spinelli, CMC, CCTC
Chair, CTCA Legislative Committee