



Spoken

Testimony
Betsy Gara, Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the
Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 11, 2013

RE: SB-901, AN ACT CONCERNING POST-ELECTION AUDITS

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) *supports* SB-901, An Act Concerning Post-Election Audits, with revisions.

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 also comply with post-election audits in order to ensure the integrity of the election process. However, the current audit selection process sometimes imposes a significant burden on certain towns by subjecting them to frequent post-election audits even though there have been no discrepancies found in previous audits. Some towns have been audited several years in a row.

Frequent post-election audits impose a considerable burden on small towns. The audits are generally held in mid-November when people are making holiday plans and it is often difficult to find available poll workers to conduct a recount of ballots by hand. It also imposes cost burdens on these towns because the process takes time away from other town functions, which must be made up, and requires poll workers to be paid.

While SB-901 is an effective bill in that it is streamlining the post-election audit process for the Secretary of State, it provides little benefit for small towns. This one benefit is that if a randomly selected district chosen for the audit is in a municipality that already has three districts chosen for a single election or primary, the Secretary of State is to select an alternative district. Therefore, a municipality can have no more than three district post-election audits per time.

Unfortunately, the bill does not limit how many years in a row a given town or district within a town may be randomly selected for an audit. Therefore, SB-901 still leaves the small towns with a heavy and costly burden should we continue to be randomly selected for these post-election audits.

COST urges the committee to consider language that will provide that no town shall be selected for audit more than one time during any three consecutive years. This would also be inconsistent with Connecticut's state ethics law, which provides that "By law, no registrant shall be subject to audit more than one time during any three consecutive years. Gen. Stat. § 1-96a(a)."