



**Town of Fairfield** • Registrar of Voters Office  
611 Old Post Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824

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Testimony of Matthew Waggner, Registrar  
(203) 256-3115 | mwaggner@town.fairfield.ct.us

Dear Co-Chairs Musto and Jutila, Ranking Members Hwang and McLachlan, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Matt Waggner, I am a Registrar of Voters from Fairfield, and currently serving as the Chair of the Registrar of Voters Association's Technology Committee. I would like to speak in my capacity as a Registrar on two of the bills being considered today.

**SB 441 - An Act Concerning Electronic or Manual Check-In of Voters, the Process of Voting, and Electronic Filing of Official Check Lists**

SB 441 does two things; the first is to transfer the authority of the Registrars in the polling place from the Assistant Registrars to a single Official Checker. This change is unwise, as these checkers need not be residents of the town or, in fact, voters at all, as 16- and 17-year olds may perform this task under current law. I understand that the Registrars' Association is withdrawing their request for this change.

The second thing that SB 441 does is open the door to using electronic poll-books as the official, authorized checklist for our elections. These systems are currently being demoed in a number of towns as additional to the paper list, and are generally laptops with proprietary software allowing some level of communication between the polling place and a central location (such as Town Hall.)

As it stands, I believe this bill is premature. The concept of using networked systems at polling sites offers the potential for more efficient management of the process, non-disenfranchising voter identity verification, real-time data availability (which could lead to the suspension of unofficial checkers), and future election regionalization. However, there are a number of prerequisites to achieving these goals, such as:

- Managed connections to the secure database that contains our official voter data (possibly requiring additional state programming work);
- Specific testing and approval by the Secretary of the State's office to ensure that systems in use handle voters in a uniform way;
- A state policy for electronically signing required election documents
- Expansion of emergency plans to handle problems arising in the event of power or data connection failure; and
- Establishing common data formats to ensure that we don't further balkanize our election system with 169 separate kinds of lists

Further, a cost-benefit analysis would not necessarily favor the purchase and maintenance of a fleet of laptops with custom software over the printing of short documents once per year, so we should be sure to proceed with the legislature's guidance about the longer-term vision that these systems are meant to enable. At this point, I think many of the goals I'd mentioned earlier are still relatively controversial.

At this point, I believe that a pilot program in which towns may demo electronic systems alongside the established paper list system, similar to that considered last year, is the most appropriate course of action.

### **SJ 24 - A Resolution Proposing a Constitutional Amendment to Permit Overseas Military Voters an Opportunity to Waive the Right of Secret Voting in Order to Vote by Any Method Permitted Under State Law**

While I believe it is appropriate to make accommodations for military and other overseas voters to ensure that their ballots are counted as a part of the final election results, the approach before you is deeply flawed.

First, the proposal specifically applies to "active duty military personnel stationed overseas," a definition which would exclude non-active duty citizens, such as overseas military families, civilian military employees, diplomatic personnel, traveling students, and other citizens traveling abroad for either short or long periods of time. Further, active-duty personnel stationed on American soil, in American territorial waters, or in other countries on our continent would be in limbo as to what methods of voting would be available to them.

The world of overseas balloting is already complex, and creating methods of voting which apply to some but not all overseas voters will create unnecessary confusion and ultimately result in additional rejected ballots and legal challenges in close contests.

Secondly, I would ask the committee to take a very careful approach to any change that would undermine the right to a secret ballot. Not only does the secrecy of the ballot provide the voter with protection against coercion in voting, but it also ensures that the votes are handled in a uniform way by officials. Our system is carefully designed to ensure that a voter's preferences are not taken into account when official decisions about voter eligibility are made.

Finally, this committee considered, in the last session, the "Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act," which addresses the challenges experienced by military voters in a way that not only avoids the problems inherent in SJ 24, but also would bring a greater level of uniformity to the process for all overseas citizens wishing to vote, regardless of their home state. I urge you to consider the approach recommended by the Commissioners on Uniform State Laws and enacted in at least twelve states so far, rather than adopting the changes in SJ 24.