



State of Connecticut  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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**CHAIRMAN**  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
BANKS COMMITTEE  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**Testimony in Support of  
House Bill 6904 - An Act Concerning the Appointment of Registrars of Voters**

Chairpersons Cassano and Jutila and Ranking Members McLachlan and Smith and members of the Government, Administrations and Elections Committee:

I am here to testify in support of **House Bill 6904 - An Act Concerning the Appointment of Registrars of Voters**, which would amend Title 9 of the general statutes to permit municipalities to appoint one, non-partisan Registrar of Voters.

By way of background, I think it is important to explain what the Charter of the City of Hartford currently provides and why a change to state statute is necessary. In November 2013, the electors of the City voted in favor of a charter revision question to require the City to appoint "one or more" Registrar of Voters beginning in January 2017 which is after the four-year terms of the three current registrars of voters expire. (Note: Hartford is the only municipality in the State with three registrars of voters because Conn. Gen. Stat. § 9-190 requires that there be a both Democratic and Republican registrar of voters even when one of the major party candidates finishes in third place in a municipal election. The Working Families Party Registrar of Voters garnered more votes than the Republican Registrar of Voters in both the 2008 and 2012 municipal elections).

Therefore, whether the Legislature acts or not, the City will not elect any registrars of voters in 2016. Rather, the City Council will appoint the City's registrar or registrars of voters going forward per the amended City Charter and in accordance with the general statutes which permit municipalities to elect or appoint registrars of voters. However, if there is no change to state law, the City will have to appoint at least two registrars of voters - a Democrat and a Republican.

My limited request of this Committee and the full Legislature is to amend state law to permit any town to appoint one, non-partisan registrar of voters if a local charter has been amended to provide for that system. Such a change would be consistent with the goals of Chapter 99 of the general statutes which provides for "home rule" and allows municipalities to establish a form of government that works best for their individual communities. This change to state law does not have to be mandatory. It can simply give each municipality the option to enact a system of its choosing and it also gives voters the opportunity to weigh in on any such change since charters may only be amended through a

vote of the electors per Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191. If a town is a statutory town and has no charter, any state law could require that the appointment of one registrar of voters be approved by voters at referendum.

In closing, some members of the Legislature have expressed concerns about the appointment process for a town which has just one registrar of voters. In particular, there is concern that the party which controls the legislative body in a town may not appoint a person who will carry out the duties of a registrar of voters in a fair and equitable manner. In an effort to address this concern, I would recommend that any town which appoints only one registrar of voters be required to have said appointment be made by an independent municipal body entitled a "Board of Election Accountability." The Board of Election Accountability could make the final appointment of the registrar of voters and be structured in a way statutorily so that its membership will be bipartisan and perform its duties in a nonpartisan manner.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

*Matt Ritter*

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