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CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee

February 6, 2015 Public Hearing

SB 848 AAC POLLING PLACES FOR PRIMARIES

Comments submitted by Yvonne D. Senturia, Election Laws Specialist

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The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a nonpartisan, statewide organization committed to effective public policy, the active involvement of citizens in their government and improving the electoral process. We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on SB 848 *An Act Concerning Polling Places for Primaries*. The League supports the concept of allowing consolidation of polling places used in primaries, but would like to identify several issues in SB 848 regarding timing of notifications and the procedures surrounding candidate objections.

Primaries, in most cases, have a significantly lower voter turnout and it makes fiscal sense to allow Registrars to consolidate polling places. Just as federal/state elections may not be held in the same polling place as a municipal election, consolidating polling places for primaries once electors become used to a location should not be an inconvenience to the voters. We question, however, whether this kind of electoral change should be implemented so close to the primary date, without public discussion, rather than on a multi-year basis following opportunity for public comment.

The bill includes procedures to inform candidates and voters of the change in polling place and to minimize voter inconvenience, but the short window between the deadline for candidate objections to the Secretary of State (30 days prior to election, followed by 'prompt' notification of Registrars), and the deadline for voter notification of changes in polling places (25 days prior to election) would seem to present logistical difficulties. We also question why candidate objections, which automatically reverse consolidation, would remain anonymous, in light of state FOIA statutes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this bill.