



TOWN OF GREENWICH

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS
Sharon B. Vecchiolla
(203) 622-7890
(203) 622-7707

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS
Fred DeCaro III
(203) 622-7889
(203) 622-6497

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Testimony Concerning:

SB 1051 – “AN ACT STRENGTHENING CONNECTICUT'S ELECTIONS”

SB 1041 – AN ACT CONCERNING POST-ELECTION AUDIT INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY

HB 6950 - AN ACT CONCERNING REFORMS TO ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and Members of the GAE:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Registrars of Voters of the Town of Greenwich, Sharon Vecchiolla, and Fred DeCaro III. We submit this testimony together, in the same way we serve all of the voters of our town.

SB 1051 proposes that our system of two Registrars of Voters representing the major parties be scrapped in favor of an appointed administrator.

We have concerns about this matter from a perspective of checks and balances, fiscal prudence, and voter confidence.

In Greenwich, we have found that elected officials who act as department heads typically have more modest spending increases than other departments. In Greenwich, spending in the registrars office has increased by only 1.1% over the past 4 years. In addition, by maintaining two registrars who are both considered part time, we save considerably over the cost of a single full-time administrator who would be entitled to a full benefits package. At a time when health care and other benefits costs are outpacing other expenses, adding to our benefits-eligible headcount is imprudent. In most cases, putting the entire workload onto a single administrator is going to be more costly for towns across the state.

Appointing your chief elections official seems to be a recipe for patronage and possible corrupt practices. As many towns in CT may have lopsided majorities in voter registration and in the makeup of the municipal officials, it behooves us to make certain that both major parties have assurances that there are checks and balances in the process. Registrars have authority to establish the location of polling places, which can have a significant impact on voter turnout. They have the authority to make critical decisions regarding voter eligibility on, and in advance of, Election Day. Single-party dominance of this office will erode confidence in our system.

Perhaps even more problematic would be the lack of continuity in towns where the political balance shifts between parties: Is the single proposed registrar going to be subject to re-appointment every

two years, after each town's legislative body is re-elected? Ask any elections official and they will tell you that the experience necessary to conduct a Presidential election truly requires participation in the preceding four years.

At the press conference announcing this bill, Secretary of the State Merrill said: "The problems I'm seeing are not so much partisanship issues at the local level as much as they are [kind of] workplace issues." We would respectfully suggest that workplace issues, and other issues affecting the office, could be more effectively dealt with if there were mechanisms in place statewide for the removal of any elected official. No party is going to re-nominate a Registrar whom the collective electorate has suggested be removed. And if they did, it would be with the same egregious disregard for public perception that would allow them to retain a bad appointed official.

There are other bills up for hearing today which we would like to comment on:

SB 1041 - AN ACT CONCERNING POST-ELECTION AUDIT INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY

The bill proposes Section 9-310 of the general statutes be amended so that tabulators shall remain sealed immediately after the election in a tabulator bag. In our town we use sealed, locked metal containers to transport tabulators and ballots back to our town, and keep all elections materials sealed in these locked containers for 14 days. We would request that the language "tabulator bag" be replaced with the language "in a container approved by the Secretary of the State" This revised language would also be consistent with what is used throughout the remainder of the document.

Without that language, the new system proposed will require us to remove the tabulator from the ballot box and seal it in a fabric bag prior to locking it into our metal transport case. This will add time at the polls and will add additional delay to the tabulation of election results.

HB 6950 - AN ACT CONCERNING POST-ELECTION AUDIT INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY

We support this bill in concept and generally in practice. We have previously submitted testimony about "unknown" votes previously. We do think it would be equally effective and less frustrating for a voter to simply report all unknown votes as such, but in any case we believe the current system of using a mathematical formula to assign voter intent is inappropriate, and should be changed.

Thank you.

Fred DeCaro III
Republican Registrar of Voters

Sharon Vecchiolla
Democratic Registrar of Voters