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Testimony to the GAE Committee—Public Hearing, March 9, 2015

HB 1051 and HB 6950

Greetings to the GAE Committee. We are Carole Young-Kleinfeld (D) and Tina Gardner (R), the two registrars of voters for the Town of Wilton and are submitting joint testimony on the following bills—HB 1051 and HB 6950.

HB 1051—We support many aspects of this bill, especially Section 1's proposed qualifications for the position of registrar—the 4 years of experience in elections or similar field, knowledge of election laws, baseline computer proficiency—and the increased emphasis on training and certification of registrars and their deputies. We urge you to include assistant registrars as eligible for such training and certification and to enact the proposals for training, certification, and job qualifications as presented.

We also support:

- **Section 23** allowing two or more municipalities to enter into cooperative agreements to perform any Title 9 elections functions—such as performing post-election audits or selected voter outreach activities.
- **Section 43g**—allowing the use of the online voter registration system to be used to facilitate registration as part of Election Day Registration.

Additionally, we propose two suggestions.

First, before enacting personnel changes to our elections structure, such as eliminating one registrar in each community, we urge the committee to call for establishment of a commission to examine the overall performance of our elections system, to explore any necessary changes to the office of registrar of voters, and to optimize the use of technology in making our system more responsive to voters. In 2011, the Secretary of the State convened the Elections Performance Task Force. The time may be right for a follow-up to that effort.

Second, as an alternative to the proposal to eliminate one registrar and as an incremental step toward increased professionalism, we suggest consideration of continuing with two registrars (one from each major party) but appointing them through each municipality's usual personnel process and using established job qualifications to assess all applicants' suitability for fulfilling the duties of a registrar in a cooperative, non-partisan manner. In the same way that a municipality recruits, interviews, and hires the best qualified candidates for assessor or town planner, so would they recruit and attract the best qualified applicants for registrars of voters and deputies.

Continued....

HB 6950

Oppose Section 1. We oppose Section 1 which would treat double-votes for cross-endorsed candidates as typical overvotes. In typical overvotes, a voter casts votes for two different candidates, but in the case of a cross-endorsement, a voter has cast votes for the *same person* on different party lines. The voter is very clear on his preference and should not be forced to re-do an entire ballot. EDR and absentee voters would not even be offered the chance to correct their ballots. Currently, our machines are programmed to detect these votes, count them only once, and to record each one on the tabulator tape as an "Unknown" Party vote. Re-programming our machines to treat these ballots as overvoted ballots could easily result in the loss of those votes entirely if polling place officials were to use the tabulator's "override" function to ignore the overvoted race, as is frequently done after the closing of the polling place. For our additional reasons for opposing this bill, please note our testimony for the GAE Public Hearing on February 13, 2015 on SB601.

Oppose Section 4. We oppose this section because no there is no requirement included for a post-election audit to be conducted on an independent voting machine, separately programmed and meeting basic state certification standards and regulations. It is not secure or accurate to re-run ballots through the same tabulator used for an election or from a tabulator programmed identically by the same company. Doing so defeats the rationale for a transparent, open, and accurate post-election audit process.

Support Section 5. We support these suggestions for increased training and certification of registrars, deputies, and assistants.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Carole Young-Kleinfeld and Tina Gardner, Registrars
Wilton, CT