

TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

March 6, 2015

Testimony in **Opposition** to: SB 1051 – Strengthening Connecticut’s Election’s

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila and Members of the GAE,

My name is Cynthia A. Bruno and I am the Democratic Registrar of Voters for the Town of Ridgefield. I am writing to you today to oppose Sec. Merrill’s Bill concerning changes in our Election System in our great State of Connecticut. There are challenges to running elections. However this Bill does not address the needs our **working** system has and misrepresents current activity with this suggestion of sweeping changes.

Changing the elected positions of two Registrar of Voters of opposing parties to one single appointed Registrar will eliminate the checks and balances that our system now has. No one party has an advantage now regardless of which party is in the majority in a given municipality. The need for two sets of eyes that have the ultimate responsibility has increased with the testing of memory cards, proofing ballots and conducting supervised absentee ballots. Having two Registrar’s with equal accountability is the best system for our voters. It is the voter’s rights that are at stake in every election and the current system protects those rights.

As elected Registrar of Voters we are accountable to the whole electorate, our local, state and federal legislative bodies as we execute lawful elections, primaries and referendums following local, state and federal election laws. The SEEC has the authority to investigate and fine registrars whom they find guilty of negligence. To suggest we are not accountable to anyone is just not accurate.

This Bill suggests that Registrar of Voters lack education in the area of elections. Not accurate. Most of the education has been done by our Registrar’s Association and best practice networking. The manual for Registrar’s has been updated by members of ROVAC. Our latest version of a District Moderator Return was created by a Registrar. The certification of Moderators has long been the responsibility of a few Registrars’ of Voters. ROVAC members have also been working for some time on a certification program to be offered in conjunction with UCONN. With the assistance of ROVAC and fellow experienced Registrars we all continually evaluate our election system and procedures. We gather post election day to review and share findings. This level of cooperation is a great asset to our overall education.

The Registrar of Voters office does indeed need change in the area of technology. We are awaiting approval of Poll Books, electronic means to check off voters. Improvement in our state wide computer system, Connecticut Voter Registration System, is vital as is electronic election night reporting. These improvements are all available now and there implementation will greatly improve our Elections.

The negative comments you may have read or heard at press conferences simply do not represent the whole picture. As elected officials yourselves I’m sure you have shared in that experience. Our election system works, candidates are elected on every level of government, budgets are passed, and referendum questions are decided. Like any system it is always a good practice to review, evaluate and make thoughtful suggestions that work toward improvements. SB 1051 is not a good bill to insure improvements to our **currently working** election system. Please oppose this bill and the changes it represents.

Sincerely,
Cynthia A. Bruno