



330 Main Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
860-523-9146 | www.acluct.org

**Testimony in Support to House Bill No. 1051,
An Act Strengthening Connecticut's Elections**

March 9, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and distinguished members of the Committee on Government Administration and Elections. My name is David McGuire. I am the Staff Attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT) and I'm here to testify in support of House Bill No. 1051, An Act Strengthening Connecticut's Elections. Our organization has consistently fought to uphold the rights of citizens to register to vote, to exercise their franchise and to have their votes correctly recorded and accurately counted.

On Election Day last year some voters were turned away or had to wait at polls in Hartford because lists of eligible voters had not been delivered to at least six polling locations before the polls opened. Embarrassingly, Secretary of the State Denise Merrill and Governor Malloy were unable to immediately cast their ballots. As a result, Secretary of the State Denise Merrill led a misconduct complaint against the Hartford registrars of voters with the State Elections Enforcement Commission. Sadly these voting mishaps are not isolated or rare in the state of Connecticut. According to news reports voters in Bridgeport, Fairfield, Hartford and Naugatuck were impacted by voting difficulties. In recent memory almost every major election has been plagued with serious technical issues including too few ballots and a lack of complete updated voting lists. Additionally we also received numerous reports of voters being disenfranchised by misinformation at the polls.

These unfortunate incidents indicate the clear need for Connecticut to professionalize and depoliticize the office of the registrar of voters. We support House Bill 1051 because it would bring our state into line with the rest of the country by requiring registrars to possess considerable knowledge of records management techniques and Connecticut election laws and mandate that these officials are computer literate. We also strongly support the proposed requirement that registrars of voters be trained, examined and certified.

As this committee is well aware, voting is a precious right in our democracy that we must protect. If the state's Governor can't easily vote, then we know our most marginalized citizens are being denied that inalienable right. Please take this opportunity to help all our friends and neighbors in Connecticut exercise their right to participate in our democracy by reevaluating and modernizing Connecticut's registrar of voter laws.