



**GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING FEBRUARY 29, 2016**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL SB 250
AN ACT CONCERNING HOURS OF ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION**

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and members of the GAE committee, my name is Melissa Russell, and I am a registrar of voters in Bethlehem, as well as the president of the Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut (ROVAC) and I am here today to speak in favor of SB 250.

2016 will be the third year in which Election Day Registration (EDR) is in effect in Connecticut. Registrars around the state have now had three elections in which to practice the procedures set forth in statute, and are looking ahead to the Presidential election this year, where we anticipate a huge increase in the number of EDR voters, and are trying to identify situations and problems in order to head them off before they occur.

The largest potential problem that we anticipate is the 8pm cut off time for processing registrations. Unlike a polling place where, if an elector is in line by 8pm they can cast their vote no matter how long they have to wait in line, the EDR location has a drop dead cut off time, and anyone in line will not be allowed to cast a vote. Clearly, this is a situation that is fraught with potential problems -- people waiting in line for an hour or more being turned away 8pm without having been able to cast a vote, headlines in the papers the next day about disenfranchised voters, and so on.

We propose a two pronged solution that can help to mitigate this potential disaster. The first is **to move the deadline for EDR to 7pm in** on Election Day, and the second is **to allow anyone who is standing in line at 7pm be able to register and cast their vote.**

One of the requirements of processing EDR voters is that if a voter is registered in another town in Connecticut, registrars must call that other town to ascertain whether or not that person already voted in the other town. By having a 7pm cut off time, registrars or their EDR staff, have an hour to go through the line, find out who is already registered in another town, and make those phone calls before the polls are closed—while poll workers are still in place and able to give the registrars the necessary information. A 7pm cut off time also allows those in line to be processed, so that we are less likely to be turning away potential voters.

As registrars, it's important to us to allow anyone who is eligible to register to vote according to law to be able to do so, and anyone who is a registered voter to be able to cast their ballot. We believe that this tweak to the Election Day Registration procedures will help us fulfill our goal, and create a better election experience for the public.

I thank you for your consideration of this proposal, and look forward to answering any questions you may have.