



**Testimony
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Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Government Administration and Elections Committee
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The Connecticut Council of Small Towns supports **SB-253, AN ACT CONCERNING POLLING PLACES FOR PRIMARIES**, to allow municipalities to reduce the number of polling places for primaries.

Under current law, towns are required to have the same number of polling locations for both primary and general elections even though voter turnout is significantly lower for party primaries. An estimated 50% of the state's 2.4 million registered voters aren't even eligible to participate in primaries because they are not registered with a party.

Requiring towns to use and staff the same number of polling places is expensive and unnecessary. In fact, the Office of Fiscal Analysis has estimated that the bill could save some towns up to \$25,000 per year. Given the difficult financial circumstances facing towns, it makes sense to give them the option to reduce costs in this manner.

Recently, a bill nearly identical to this proposed bill was passed but vetoed by Governor Malloy. In the Governor's veto message on June 6, 2012, he expressed his paramount concern that the act compromised the democratic process and the citizens' right to vote because the reduction in polling places was at the discretion of the Town Registrar without any input from the affected citizens. This proposed legislation would alleviate that concern by providing that the reduction in polling places can only occur if the registrar of voters and all candidates on the ballot agree. Additionally, all affected electors would be notified of the reduction.

This agreement and notification will be significantly less of a burden administratively and more cost efficient than continuing to operate and staff polling places that are unnecessary in some of our smaller towns. By providing that notice be sent to electors regarding the reductions and the location of alternative polling places, the bill ensures that citizens will have the information they need to vote in party primaries.

Therefore, COST supports proposed bill SB-253 and urges the GAE Committee to move forward in helping small towns to be more effective and efficient in its use of polling places for primaries while still allowing *all* its citizens the right to vote.