

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5419

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING CENTRAL COUNTING OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS.

Vote Date: 3/23/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/15/2018

File No.: 439

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently the law requires that absentee ballots be counted at the polling places unless the registrars of voters agree to count them centrally. The bill seeks to reverse this practice so that trained election workers, familiar with the absentee ballot envelopes and process can process the results in a central, uniform location. It would require that absentee ballots cast at any election, primary or referendum in a municipality be counted at a central location, unless the registrars of voters agree to count them at the polling places.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Stephen Elworthy, Registrar of Voters, Town of Fairfield: Mr. Elworthy stated that the counting of absentee ballots requires having separately trained election workers who are familiar with the procedures of opening Absentee Ballot envelopes. These workers require specific training in the event that there are issues with the envelope order. Mr. Elworthy further stated in large towns this may cause a personnel and financial burden if extra workers are needed for each district. Often it is difficult to find good poll workers. If we train workers for either the polls or absentee counting, rather than requiring them to be trained for both it may encourage more participation.

Sue W. Larsen, ROVAC President. Ms. Larsen stated the registrars have worked with the town clerks on many issues. Both parties are familiar with the process and that familiarity

makes it a logical choice when there is a difference of opinion between two registrars of voters as to where the absentee ballots are counted. In addition, Ms. Larsen stated the registrars of voters and the town clerks are responsible for determining the polling location in an emergency. It is a logical choice to keep the relationship between the registrars of voters and the town clerks in settling issues relating to elections.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Matthew Waggoner, Registrar of Voters, Town of Fairfield: This proposal would incur additional costs associated with ballot printing and memory card programming, resulting in election returns taking hours longer to complete and diminish election integrity by ensuring that absentee and Election Day Registration ballots in towns impacted by the measure are never audited, with no benefit whatsoever to voters.

Maureen O'Reilly

Date: 4/12/18