

Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-279

AN ACT EXEMPTING THE DATE OF BIRTH OF A POLICE OFFICER FROM

Title: DISCLOSURE UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.

Vote Date: 3/16/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/6/2018

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would make it more difficult for certain aggrieved individuals to determine the place of residence of police officers, should they be inclined to seek retribution for an arrest or investigation. It would exempt state and municipal police officers, as well sworn officers of the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of Correction, from disclosure of their dates of birth under the Freedom of Information Act. Dates of birth can be used to more easily determine places of residence when using the internet.

*****JFS added employees of Department of Correction to section 1(a).**

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Puorro, Derek, chairman of the Public Safety Council 4 AFSCME, and police officer with the City of Middletown

Mr. Puorro testified in favor of the bill. He said no longer having ready access to date of birth information would make it more difficult to obtain officers' residential information, which in turn would provide some measure of safety for an officer and his or her family. There is no benefit to the public that derives from making officers' birth dates available via FOI, he said.

The Police Officers Association of Connecticut

POACT said police officers are often the subject of FOI requests due to “controversial interactions with members of the public.” Some FOI inquiries are intended to harass police officers and their families. “There is no public policy reason for any member of the public to know the birthdate of a police officer,” POACT stated.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Murphy, Colleen, executive director of and general counsel to the state Freedom of Information Commission

Ms. Murphy stated that the commission “has seen or heard no evidence that the disclosure of birth dates on public records has led to any great crisis.” She said the legislation continues a “piecemeal” approach that singles out certain categories of workers. In this case, she said, dates of birth are so routinely used on so many documents that this extra layer of protection is not necessary or warranted.

McGuire, David, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut

Mr. McGuire said the bill would “stifle people’s abilities to access information they have a right to obtain while creating unequal privacy protections for some people based solely on occupation.” The ACLU believes it is unfair to allow some people to ask for nondisclosure of their date of birth while other cannot. To be more fair and just, the bill should be expanded to allow all people – not just police officers – to sign a nondisclosure statement regarding their date of birth.

Reported by: D.G. Fisher, Assistant Clerk

Date: March 27, 2018