

**Government Administration and Elections Committee**  
**JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** HB-5422

AN ACT CONCERNING VOTING RIGHTS AND PRIMARY DAY ELECTOR

**Title:** REGISTRATION.

**Vote Date:** 3/23/2018

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/15/2018

**File No.:** 441

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**SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Government Administration and Elections

**REASONS FOR BILL:**

The bill expands the right for certain voters to vote on primary day. It would allow for Primary Day Registration (PDR) so that people eligible to vote may cast their ballots on primary day. The bill would allow anyone to register to vote, enroll in a party, and vote in person on primary day if they meet the eligibility requirements. It does not however, allow those who are already electors, and those already registered in one municipality but wants to change registration because they reside in another municipality.

**Substitute Language: Removes the ability for a person already admitted as an elector, but not affiliated with a party, to take part in primary day registration. For example, only people who are not already registered to vote may avail themselves.**

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Denise Merrill, Secretary of the State, Connecticut**

Secretary Merrill states that Election Day Registration in Connecticut has been a huge success. In 2016, almost 40,000 voters took advantage of the opportunity to register to vote, or change their address, on Election Day. She believes the bill is a common sense expansion that is long overdue.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Matthew Waggnar, Registrar of Voters, Town of Fairfield, CT**

Mr. Waggnar supports extending the same EDR policy to primaries and other types of elections “as uniformity in how we administer different election types provides a predictable experience for our constituents”. He does ask that the Committee to consider permitting party enrollment applications to be submitted at the polling place: each polling place has “Assistant Registrars” who already review and accept voter changes. Requiring voters who find out that they’re not in a party to go to a different location to vote is a senseless waste of time, and incurs additional costs for our offices with no corresponding benefit to voters.

He believes that it would be best to process EDR applications for all elections at the regular polling places. While he understand that the intent is to provide an additional “check” against double-voting, he argues that it could be achieved in a much less costly manner if the check was performed the following day by contacting other Registrars to confirm this information rather than interrupting polling places across the state. Finally, he argues that if we eliminate the single-location requirement we could greatly reduce the wait times in larger municipalities.

### **Luther Weeks, Executive Director, CT Voters Count**

Mr. Weeks served as a Moderator during the 2016 Presidential Primary. At his polling place in Glastonbury he was saddened to tell citizens that they could not vote because they either were not registered or had forgotten that they had registered unaffiliated years ago or they moved to Connecticut from another state and did not understand our system. Additionally, many citizens thought they had registered but were not on the system. He gives one example of one citizen that waited while he checked with the registrar’s office and they did register to vote, but it was a paperwork error on the part of officials.

Mr. Weeks argues that Election Day Registration could have solved these problems. He believes that many get frustrated and he fears we may never see those voters again. He fears many of the voters who became reengaged in the process during the election and were excited to vote will not return because they were turned away.

### **Garrett Sullivan**

Mr. Sullivan supports this bill for the purpose of increasing voter turnout and representation.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

### **Timothy Beeble, Registrar of Voters, Town of Bethel, CT and Member, ROVAC Legislative Committee**

Mr. Beeble does not support HB 5422. He believes that since unaffiliated electors would be able to affiliate with a party on Primary Day and cast a vote, that these newly affiliated voters could determine the Party’s nominee because they represent more than half of the enrolled electors in many towns.

He also argues that the cost of PDR would be great on towns because they would require the Registrar of Voters to hire more staff to newly registered or affiliated electors at the Primary

Day registration site. It would be hard for the Registrars of Voters to adequately plan for a mandated PDR and with municipal budgets tight or being cut, it would be a burden to the towns.

Mr. Beeble believes that the current law, that gives 18 hours before primary polling places open is adequate time to allow newly registered electors or for Unaffiliated electors to affiliate with a party. Furthermore, he argues that even if they miss the registration deadline of noon on the day of before the Primary, they can still register and vote in the election in November.

**Reported by: Susan Tufts**

**Date: 4/13/18**