

**Testimony of Steven R. Donen of Cromwell, CT
Concerning
HB 7392 An Act Concerning Voter Privacy**

**Government Administration and Elections Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
March 25, 2019**

Good afternoon, Senator Flexer and Representative Fox, Senator Sampson and Representative France and other members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Steve Donen, I am a resident of Cromwell, Connecticut and I am here to oppose HB 7392 An Act Concerning Voter Privacy.

For thirty years, I have been the Owner and President of S D Associates, a small business in Hartford that provides a wide range of computer-related products and services to agencies of local, state and federal government, nonprofit organizations and political campaigns.

Among the services we provide are the development and enhancement of voter files in various states, including Connecticut. We improve the quality of addresses on these files using sophisticated mailing software and then enhance these files with such information as telephone numbers, ethnic and gender codes and additional voter history to make this information more valuable to candidates and committees. We then produce mailing lists and telephone lists for candidates and committees as well as to other companies in Connecticut and across the country that design and produce direct mail, make calls to voters and conduct polls.

I've hired numerous computer programmers over the years as well as dozens of Connecticut high school and college students that have conducted research and keypunched information on voter history.

First, let me call to your attention that although I was unable to attend the Committee's public hearing on March 13th, I did submit testimony which is online expressing my concerns about the provision in HB 7321 that limited disclosure of part of the date of birth and the difficulty that would cause in meeting the needs of candidates and committees in the production of direct mail, making calls to voters and conducting accurate polls.

This bill goes much farther, restricting anyone other than candidates and political committees from acquiring voter registration information.

I believe that the most important reason to oppose this bill is that it is inconsistent with Connecticut's tradition of open government and full access to public records under our state's Freedom of Information Act.

A second reason for opposing this bill is that it does not solve the problem of identity theft that some would suggest this bill attempts to address; studies show that the principal sources of information that leads to identity theft are credit card numbers and social security numbers, not dates of birth that are included on voter files.

Third, access to this information should not be restricted because there is no expectation of privacy with voter information because voters submit their names, addresses, preferred party affiliation and dates of birth when they register to vote! They know that that information is available to the public just as they know that information on their homes is available in the local tax office and their telephone numbers are listed in local directories.

Finally, this bill would make it more difficult for many small businesses like mine to work with dozens of other small businesses such as printers to meet the needs of candidates and committees and agencies of local, state and federal government. It would make it impossible to work with special interest groups advocating here in Hartford or in Washington whose participation in the governmental process is guaranteed under the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

I want to remind committee members that a similar bill introduced last year (HB 5173) was opposed by both sides of the aisle in this committee and was gutted to only restrict access to the month and day of birth. That bill died on the House Calendar at the end of the session.

In conclusion, I hope you will reject this bill again this year. I mentioned last year the challenges and high costs small businesses face in Connecticut, this bill would put me out of business.

Thank you for your attention and time today