



Testimony of

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Government Administration and Elections Committee
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HB 5418 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the State Contracting Standards Board

SJ 27 Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting

HJ 161 Resolution Proposing An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting and No-Excuse Absentee Voting

Good afternoon Senator Flexer, Representative Fox and members of the Commerce Committee. My name is Sal Luciano and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 220,000 members in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state, and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today about a number of bills that impact Connecticut's working families.

HB 5418 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the State Contracting Standards Board: SUPPORT

As a member of the State Contracting Standards Board (SCSB), I urge the Committee to support this bill.

The SCSB was enacted in 2007 as an independent Executive Branch agency after Governor Rowland pled guilty to accepting vacations, airfare and home improvements from contractors who did business with the state. The SCSB is charged with ensuring the effectiveness and integrity of the state contracting and procurement processes and has authority over acquisition and management of supplies, services, and construction; state contracting and procurement processes and practices; and contracts for the construction, reconstruction, alteration, remodeling, repair, or demolition of public buildings. It also has significant authority to oversee the outsourcing of state services.

Since its creation, the SCSB has been limited in its ability to perform its core functions due to repeated attempts (many successful) to eviscerate its funding, the inability for months at a time to achieve a quorum due to incomplete appointments and insufficient staffing levels. This has been troubling not just because the Board is charged with key government oversight responsibilities to enhance transparency and prevent corruption, but it also has tremendous potential to identify significant cost savings and efficiencies throughout state agencies.

The SCSB began to turn a corner in the last year or so when all board member vacancies were finally filled and key staff were hired. Now it needs two things to fulfill its mission; adequate funding and the improvements to the SCSB statute contained in HB 5418.

HB 5418 improves the work and effectiveness of the SCSB in several ways. It:

- Changes authority to grant waivers from competitively bidding personal service agreements from the OPM Secretary to the SCSB and requires the SCSB to make waiver requests public.
- Adds legislative and judicial branch agencies to the definition of “state contracting agency,” thereby requiring compliance with SCSB procurement practices in order protect taxpayer dollars.
- Requires all state employees responsible for all types of procurement and contracting functions to complete a training program developed by the SCSB. Those who successfully complete the training will be deemed certified, having established the knowledge required to fully comply with state contracting statutes.
- Establishes a Chief Procurement Officer who shall report to the SCSB and report annually on how to improve state procurement processes, receive complaints related to procurement and monitor the cost provisions of contracting regulations.

We often hear that state government should be run more like a business. While the state’s mission differs greatly than the goals shared by many businesses, there are things the state can learn from business. I suspect that no business would enter into any contract without first doing its full due diligence, like conducting a cost-benefit analysis or completing a cost-effectiveness evaluation.

Non-profit providers assert that this bill, and others like it, creates needless administrative burdens for state agencies and non-profit agencies. They also claim the proposal is unjustifiable in times of fiscal constraint. Yet that is precisely the reason we urge the committee to pass this bill. If non-profits can truly provide the same service for fewer state dollars, then they should have no problem demonstrating that to state agencies and the State Contracting Standards Board by fulfilling the requirements of current statute and this proposal. In times of fiscal constraint, taxpayers need to have certainty that public dollars are being spent appropriately and effectively.

SJ 27 Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting and HJ 161 Resolution Proposing An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting and No-Excuse Absentee Voting: SUPPORT

The United States has one of the lowest voter participation rates in the developed world. One of the most common reasons people give for not voting is that they’re too busy juggling the responsibilities of work and family. Well-intentioned employees, who may attempt to vote before or after work, are not always able to cast a ballot. Voter turnout, family responsibilities, weather, traffic, public transportation issues and other variables can make Election Day an especially-chaotic workday. In order to ensure employees are able to exercise their constitutional rights to vote and meet work and family obligations, SJ 27 and HJ 161 propose remedies that many other states have already adopted – no-excuse absentee voting and early voting.

Neither federal nor Connecticut law requires employers to provide employees time off to cast their ballots. Connecticut is one of only seventeen states that do not provide any kind of protection for employees who want to exercise their franchise. SJ 27 and HJ 161 provide important flexibility to help workers be able to effectively manage their time to work and vote. Both SJ 27 and HJ 161 would allow voters to plan ahead and request an absentee ballot for any reason, including scheduling challenges. HJ 161 goes one step further and establishes at least a three-day early voting period in advance of Election Day. Both of these proposals effectively expand the 14-hour voting window on Election Day to ensure all registered voters can vote.

Thirty-nine states and Washington, DC already have early voting. It alleviates long lines at polling places and accommodates elderly or sick voters who may not feel well enough to appear at a polling

place on Election Day. It also allows Registrars of Voters to “ease into” Election Day; troubleshoot problems and fix them without the constraints of a massive one-day event. These proposals strengthen our democracy by giving voters maximum opportunity and flexibility to vote. We urge the Committee to support these resolutions so voters will have a chance to decide if the state constitution should be amended to provide no-excuse absentee voting and early voting.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.