

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5815

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING POLITICAL ADVERTISING.

Vote Date: 4/1/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/27/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Co-sponsors

Rep. Godfrey, 110th Dist.

Rep. Elliott, 99th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

As technological advances make doctoring and altering photos more widespread and prevalent in campaign communications, this bill seeks to require a disclaimer on any doctored image that is part of a campaign communication. The new disclaimer requirement applies to any political advertisement that contains a clearly identifiable photographic, similar image, illustration of a candidate, and appears in any communication that promotes the defeat of that candidate in a primary or general election.

Substitute language LCO No- 3935: Simply adds that the communication affected can promote the success as well as the defeat of a candidate.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Michael J. Brandi, Executive Director and General Counsel, State Elections

Enforcement Commission (SEEC): Testified in opposition to this bill. He testified that the definition of “altered in any way” is overly broad, and doesn’t take into account the common practice of small alterations that are done with photographic images all the time. He further stated that even with narrowing the language, the SEEC would end up being the “truth police”, and divert valuable time and resources which could be better spent elsewhere. He recommended a task force or study group to see how best to address these issues.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Representative Bob Godfrey, 110th District: Testified that the growing uncivil behavior in government, and the widespread use of altered pictures during the last campaign prompted him to propose this legislation. He stated that 17 other states either have current or pending legislation that address these issues in some way, although none of them require the disclosure that this bill does.

Representative Liz Linehan, 103rd District: Testified that she herself was a victim of such an altered photo, in which a mail piece depicted her in an embrace with then-Governor Dan Malloy. She further stated that she would like to see the legislation become even more specific, requiring a 12 point font disclaimer in a contrasting color directly below the image.

Paula Bacolini, Glastonbury, CT: Testified that she received mail at home with such doctored images, which she believes go beyond what's decent or fair. She further stated that she believes that there should be fines or legal consequences for those who use doctored photos without a disclaimer.

James Albis, East Haven, CT: Testified that he was the subject of a doctored photo in the 2018 election cycle, and that the photos used were from his wedding day. He stated that the public should know what its real and what isn't, and that a disclaimer would allow the voter to make an informed decision.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

**Reported by: Melissa Russell
Assistant Clerk**

Date: 4/8/2019