

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

Bill No.: SB-1049

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MODERN ELECTIONS.

Vote Date: 4/1/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/13/2019

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would change and streamline laws affecting election administration. The legislation would require SOTS to develop and implement a system through which the secretary may permit any person to submit an electronic signature for the purpose of signing any election administration-related form or application. SOTS would then need to develop an online system through which individuals may register to distribute absentee ballots and that provides registrants with a unique identifier that appears on applications they distribute. The bill would require that certain disputes concerning elections or primaries be adjudicated by the superior court for the judicial district of Hartford. The Registrars of voters would be mandated to certify EDR locations to SOTS at least 31 days before the election and authorizes SOTS, after reviewing the certification, to require registrars to appoint additional election officials or alter the EDR location design.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Denise Merrill, Secretary of the State: SB 1049 would update Connecticut's election laws to reflect the reality of modern elections. The changes that would be made are common-sense elections reforms.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Mark H. Bernacki, New Britain Town & City Clerk, Connecticut Town Clerks Association (CTCA): CTCA comments are confined to section 2 of SB 1049 which seeks to establish an online system for a person to register to distribute absentee ballot applications for election, primary or referendum. CTCA recommends that great care should be given when allowing for the mass distribution of absentee ballot applications. There needs to be a system

of checks and balances in place to ensure the validity of each absentee ballot request. Creating ease and efficiency through an online system is a laudable goal, but the system also needs to maintain the integrity of each and every vote.

Sue W. Larsen, President, Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut: We welcome the Secretary of the State's plan to develop a system that signatures will be acceptable electronically. HB 6059 also includes the concept of utilizing the same format as ballot certification for EDR poll workers. Registrars of Voters support providing the Secretary of the State with this vital information to insure Election Day registration runs smoothly. Our intent is to provide all residents the opportunity to register to vote. ROVAC hopes the redistricting plan will be more inclusive of the necessary data that Registrars need in order to accomplish this task.

Cheri Quickmire, Executive Director, Common Cause in Connecticut: Common Cause supports making our elections as accessible as possible. We support eliminating the requirement for the check-in/call backs to the town where an individual was previously registered. We support requiring registrars to submit staffing plans for Election Day registration – as noted above. And we agree that the Secretary of the State should develop a system, similar to the online voter registration system hosted by the SOTS. Capturing electronic signatures for online submission of absentee ballot applications should be developed. Making it possible for election officials at polling places beyond the registrar's office to access the CVRS system will be key to successful implementation. Registrars or designated/certified election officials at additional polling places should be able to complete the processing of Election Day registrations as soon as possible after the election.

Also in support:

- Bridgeport Generation Now
- Yvonne Senturia, Election Law Specialist
- Luther Weeks, Executive Director, CT Voters Count

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Timothy Beeble, Registrar of Voters in the Town of Bethel: We are opposed to the proposed deletion of the existing provisions in Lines 639-670 which eliminates the Registrar-to-Registrar cross-check for in-state EDR voter moves. This is the one safeguard against voter fraud in EDR. The crosscheck does not delay the EDR registration approval and voting process. Since the names of the EDR voter are written on the outside of the ballot envelope, if we receive a response that an EDR voter had already voted in their prior town, we can pull the EDR ballot before it gets counted.

**Reported by: Nicholas Rogers
Committee Clerk**

Date: 4/15/19