Bill No.: SB-1095
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL ETHICS.
Vote Date: 3/29/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 3/25/2019
File No.: 

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would require municipalities to create a code of ethics to follow. Municipalities would be able to create their own code of ethics, as long as it met the state’s minimum requirements. Towns that already have a code of ethics, or has already adopted the code created by the Office of State Ethics, would only be obligated to change it if their old rules do not meet the new minimum standards set by this bill. SB 1095 was created following a study conducted by the Municipal Ethics Subcommittee of the Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board, which found that very few of the municipalities in the state had an ethics code on record. The purpose is to create transparency and set a uniform ethical standard in municipal government. The bill would also create training to be offered by the Office of State Ethics, which would help to expand on and clarify these minimum provisions.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Mary Bigelow, Chair, Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board’s Subcommittee on Municipal Ethics: supports this bill. Based on the research conducted by her committee, she believes that all municipalities should have a similar foundation. Bigelow also states that their recommendations based on this research should address fiscal concerns raised.

Peter Lewandowski, Associate General Counsel, Office of State Ethics: supports this bill, and thinks that giving the municipalities authority to create an ethics code that uniquely applies to their town will help address any fiscal problems that may arise. Mr. Lewandowski testimony was also on behalf of the Citizen’s Ethics Advisory Board.
NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Tom Swan, Executive Director, Connecticut Citizen Action Group: supports the bill, and believes that it makes sense for towns to have a code of ethics. He feels that this will help many towns avoid problems in the future.

Yvonne Senturia, Election Law Specialist, League Of Women Voters CT: supports the bill, and encourages the committee to as well. Senturia believes in “ethical government and effective public policy.”

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, CT Counsel Of Small Towns: appreciates the intent of the bill, but opposes SB 1095 because she feels that it will hurt the towns if they are forced to adopt a “one-size-fits all unfunded mandate”. Gara states that most towns have ethics codes in place. She also states that small towns may be harmed by this bill, as it will discourage families from getting involved (i.e. nepotism provisions).

Randall Collins, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities: is opposed to SB 1095. In his testimony, Mr. Collins points out that his agency currently offers training in Municipal Ethics, and for the state to offer their own program seems to be a waste of resources. Although Mr. Collins urges the Committee to oppose the bill, he does agree that having a code of ethics if very important to municipalities, he says that his organization would be willing to work with the state to find a solution that is broad enough to avoid harming small towns.

Reported by: Wesaneit Tsegai
Assistant Clerk

Date: 4/11/19