

Locating a Polling Place Outside of a Voting District's Boundaries

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Issue

Discuss the circumstances under which a municipality may locate a polling place outside of a voting district's boundaries.

Summary

State law generally requires registrars of voters to (1) provide one polling place in each voting district (commonly called a "precinct") and (2) determine these locations at least 31 days before an election ([CGS § 9-169](#)). However, registrars may designate a polling place outside of a voting district's boundaries under certain limited circumstances. Generally, these are (1) certain conflicts created by congressional or state legislative district lines or (2) the registrars determining that a voting district lacks an existing convenient or suitable polling place.

When moving a polling place, either within or outside of a voting district's boundaries, municipalities must comply with certain notice requirements. Additionally, the law requires municipalities to use the same polling place for a primary as they do for the corresponding general election ([CGS § 9-438](#)).

One Polling Place Per Voting District

By law, a municipality's legislative body may divide or periodically re-divide the municipality into voting districts. Subject to certain exceptions, registrars of voters must provide a suitable polling

place in each district. If the registrars fail to agree on a polling place location, the legislative body must make that determination.

Registrars of voters must determine polling place locations at least 31 days before an election. However, if during that period the registrars and town clerk unanimously find that a location has become unusable, they must designate another suitable location as soon as possible and provide adequate public notice of the change ([CGS §§ 9-168](#) and [9-169](#)).

Exceptions to the General Rule

As discussed below, under certain limited circumstances, municipalities may designate a polling place outside of a voting district's boundaries.

Conflicts with State Legislative or Congressional Lines

By law, if, as a result of state legislative or congressional district lines, a municipality has a voting district or part of a district in an election or primary that differs from the voting district lines for a municipal election year, the registrars of voters may provide a suitable polling place in that district or alternatively, provide separate voting tabulators in another district's polling place. The registrars must obtain the municipal legislative body's approval in order to use another district's polling place ([CGS § 9-168a\(a\)](#)),

Similarly, if state legislative or congressional lines create a voting district with fewer than 1,500 electors, the municipality's registrars of voters may provide a suitable polling place in that district or alternatively, provide separate voting tabulators in another district's polling place. The legislative body's approval is not required to use another district's polling place under these circumstances ([CGS § 9-168a\(b\)](#)).

In either case, if registrars of voters use another district's polling place, they must (1) determine the necessary polling place officials for the separate voting tabulators and (2) establish a procedure to ensure that electors use the proper machines.

Additionally, if electors from more than one district vote in the same building and for all the same officers, the registrars may combine the polling places and voting districts into one. In this case, the (1) registrars must file a statement with the town clerk before the election or primary, indicating they have combined the districts, and (2) clerk must label the polling place returns in a way that shows which districts are combined ([CGS § 9-168a\(c\)](#))

Lack of Convenient or Suitable Location Within a District

By law, if a municipality's registrars of voters are of the opinion that a voting district lacks an existing convenient or suitable polling place within its boundaries, they may designate a convenient and suitable polling place in an adjacent district. The new location must be (1) as near as possible to the boundaries of the original voting district and (2) separate from the adjacent district's polling place, except that a separate room in the same polling place may be used.

To designate a polling place in an adjacent district, the registrars must file a written opinion and designation with the town clerk at least 90 days before a regular election or primary. Within 10 days after the filing, the clerk must publish notice of it in the newspaper with the greatest circulation in the municipality. The designation remains in effect for future elections and primaries until the registrars file a document with the clerk stating that it is no longer necessary ([CGS § 9-168b](#)).

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