

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-353

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

Vote Date: 3/29/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/10/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill seeks to require every municipality in Connecticut to hold its biennial municipal election in November of odd-numbered years, unless two-thirds of the municipality's legislative body votes otherwise. Currently, four municipalities in Connecticut hold their municipal elections in May rather than in November. The bill intends to bring a degree of uniformity in terms of the timing for Connecticut's municipal elections.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Denise W. Merrill, Secretary of the State of Connecticut: By making Election Day in November the default date for municipal elections in Connecticut, Secretary Merrill states that this change would eliminate voter confusion, increase turnout and make for more efficient use of the resources in her office. She acknowledged that a municipality may choose to hold their municipal elections in May, only after a supermajority of the municipal legislative body votes in favor of such. She is supportive of the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Andover Democratic Town Committee: Andover is just one of four towns in Connecticut that conducts May elections. The Andover Democratic Town Committee supports the discontinuance of May municipal elections based on the sheer cost, nominal turnout, and unnecessary nature of these elections. Acknowledging the widely held belief that May elections give candidates more exposure in the local paper and thus leads to a higher

turnout, the Andover Democratic Town Committee dispels this notion by citing the consecutive low turnout numbers obtained from the Registrars.

Beth Heller, Woodbridge First Selectman: First Selectman Heller expressed support for the bill allowing municipalities that hold elections in May to opt instead to hold November elections. Year after year, she stated that Woodbridge experiences low voter turnout because their elections are not held in November. Citing voter confusion, she believes that providing municipalities with the opportunity to move election day from May to November would have a positive impact on voter turnout. Additionally, moving the municipal elections to November would allow the Town of Woodbridge to make more effective and efficient use of the resources provided by the Secretary of the State's office.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Chuck Pyne, Chairman, Woodbridge Republican Town Committee: In a vote at a committee meeting on March 9th, the Woodbridge Republican Committee rejected the idea of moving the municipal election from May to November. The Woodbridge Republican Town Committee believes that this bill is an overreach of the power of the state government. The committee expressed their strong desire for municipalities to be able to exercise their own discretion when determining the timing for their municipal elections.

Reported by: Trevor Hoffman

Date: 03/29/2021