

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-1014

AN ACT CONCERNING A MUNICIPAL ELECTION MONITOR FOR THE 2021

**Title:** MUNICIPAL ELECTION AND THE 2022 STATE ELECTION.

**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 establish an election monitor position in any municipality where the population exceeds one hundred forty thousand persons. The election monitor will be tasked with detecting and preventing any irregularity and impropriety in the management of election administration procedures. Election monitors will be contracted to serve in such capacity during the 2021 municipal elections as well as the 2022 state election.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Denise W. Merrill, Secretary of the State of Connecticut:** Secretary Merrill highlighted the success that came as a result of the election monitor position established in Bridgeport during the 2020 election. The election monitor was tasked with assisting the registrars and city clerks in a concerted effort to ensure that the election was administered properly, smoothly and in accordance with Title 9. Secretary Merrill acknowledged the requests from Bridgeport voters and representatives, asking to extend the program. She urged the committee to support the appropriation of funding to continue the position for the next two election cycles.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Paula Bacolini, Founder, Make Voting Easy - CT:** Citing the positive outcome that came as a result of the election monitor position established in Bridgeport last year, Ms. Bacolini believes that election monitors are critically important to maintaining security, integrity and trust in our electoral process.

**Sauda Efia Baraka, Chairperson, Bridgeport Working Families Town Committee & the Greater Bridgeport NAACP Criminal Justice Committee:** Ms. Baraka expressed the satisfaction of Bridgeport residents with the appointment of Attorney Max Medina as Bridgeport's election monitor last year. Ms. Baraka stated that Attorney Medina provided the necessary supervision and guidance for the general election, but she emphasized the need for such oversight particularly during the local primary elections. She urged the committee to support this bill so that Bridgeport voters and election officials have the necessary support to rebuild trust and ensure a free and fair election.

**Marta Daniels:** Ms. Daniels addressed the shortcomings of the bill passed in the special session, which used money from the CARES Act to establish an election monitor in Bridgeport only for the 2020 general election. She emphasized the need to continue funding an election monitor in Bridgeport for the upcoming elections, that way voters have the necessary support to restore confidence in the integrity of their elections.

**Judy Lhamon, Vice President of Advocacy, League of Women Voters of Connecticut:** Ms. Lhamon made reference to the numerous requests for an election monitor in Bridgeport, coming from both the League of Women Voters and various civic groups in the city. She made clear that she believes now is the time to implement this position in order to restore confidence in elections and government in Bridgeport.

**Cheri Quickmire, Executive Director, Common Cause in Connecticut:** Ms. Quickmire made reference to the vast improvement reported in cities where election monitors have been appointed. On behalf of Common Cause in Connecticut, Ms. Quickmire urged that the bill be passed and supervision by the office of the Secretary of the State continue in municipalities that have had election administration improprieties in the past.

**Peter Spain:** Mr. Spain, a voter from Bridgeport, submitted written testimony in support of the continued funding for the election monitor program in the city. He made clear that the city needed an impartial election monitor in order to restore trust and integrity in Bridgeport's government and elections. Additionally, Mr. Spain cited comments from Superior Court Judge Barry Stevens, where the judge called upon the legislature to take action to reform the absentee ballot process, which has been exploited by political operatives in Bridgeport. Mr. Spain acknowledged that having an election monitor in the city is a step in the right direction to prevent absentee ballot fraud, but he believes that the legislature will have to take corrective action to reform the structure of our state's voting methods.

**The following individuals submitted testimony in support of the bill establishing the election monitor position in certain municipalities. They cited reasons similar to those stated in the aforementioned testimonies:**

Gemeem Davis and Callie Gale Heilmann, Co-Directors of Bridgeport Generation Now Votes and voters in Bridgeport  
Val and Patty Chamberlain  
Linda Hudson  
Susan Miller  
Garrett Sullivan  
Elsa Peterson Obuchowski

Tanya Rhodes Smith, Director, Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political  
Social Work, University of Connecticut  
Jonathan Perloe, Co-founder and Steering Committee Member, Voter Choice Connecticut

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Trevor Hoffman**

**Date: 03/29/2021**