

General Law Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-190

AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL ASSESSMENT AND FINANCE

Title: PERSONNEL.

Vote Date: 3/15/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/1/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

General Law Committee

Co-Sponsors:

Sen., Kevin D. Witkos, 8th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill allows for the Office of Policy Management (OPM) to offer assessor, tax collector and municipal finance officer training. It also requires that the training be readily available online or at various locations around the state. This aims to help several small towns around Connecticut who have indicated that they are having difficulty hiring assessors, finance directors, and other key personnel. Given the number of retirements in municipal government, this bill seeks to ensure qualified assessors and other key finance personnel are available to municipalities.

PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

Section 3 was added to the bill to establish a committee for the purpose of developing and maintaining a program and procedures for the training, examination and certification of tax collection personnel. This committee is to have seven people, appointed by the Secretary of the Office of Policy Management, and will elect its own chairman. This additional language transfers responsibility for adopting regulations concerning tax collectors from the OPM secretary to the committee for training, examinations and certification of tax collection personnel. This language also makes an OPM employee on the committee a voting member.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Robert Bessel, First Selectman, Town of Canton

Mr. Bessel supports the bill. The town of Canton has been looking for an assessor since September. The current requirements for an assessor in Connecticut are stringent, partially because of limited availability of training. Currently, you must attend five 30-hour courses that are offered once a year in June at UConn (sometimes also in the fall) and receive a passing grade on each, acquire at least three years of experience, and then be approved to sit for a five-hour comprehensive exam and get a passing score of 70. Some towns have been looking for an assessor since June of last year, passing this legislation will help ease the burden on these towns.

Michael R. Criss, First Selectman, Town of Harwinton

Mr. Criss, representing Harwinton, supports the bill as it aimed to ensure that there are qualified assessors and other key finance personnel available to municipalities. Some small towns in Litchfield County have has a hard time finding assessors. This is not due to a lack of interest in the job, rather due to difficulty obtaining the necessary certifications as classes taking place in Storrs, Connecticut is not very convenient for individuals living in Litchfield County.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) supports the bill. COST believes that the difficulty in hiring assessors is due in large part because certification programs are not readily available throughout Connecticut. COVID-19 posed restrictions on in-person meetings and thus online training options were provided. They are in favor of and believe it would be helpful to ensure that classes continue to be provided online as well as providing additional training in other locations of the state on a regular basis.

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) supports the bill. CCM is in favor of the training for these job functions as it provides cost-effective education to keep municipal employees up to date on best practices. These trainings also provide consistency and accessibility across the state, providing resources and support to municipal officials.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Luke Tressy, Assistant Clerk

Date: 03/22/2022