

**Government Administration and Elections Committee**  
**JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** SB-470

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND OTHER  
ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS REGARDING CERTAIN VOTER

**Title:** REGISTRATION INFORMATION AND REJECTED ABSENTEE BALLOTS.

**Vote Date:** 3/29/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/25/2022

**File No.:**

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**SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

**REASONS FOR BILL:**

To allow for the expansion of information on voter registration records, to permit notifications to be sent to individuals whose absentee ballots are rejected, and to require that absentee ballots be counted throughout the day of an election.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Denise Merrill, Secretary of the State, State of Connecticut: While Secretary of the State:** Denise Merrill supports the first section of S.B. 470, which will make "a necessary technical fix to the statutes concerning information contained in the publicly available voter file," there are "some concerns with the practicality of the changes made" in the second and third sections of S.B. 470. However, both sections "share the laudable goal of making it easier for voters to cast absentee ballots and for local election officials to count them," and Secretary Merrill "would be happy to work with the proponents of the bill."

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT):** Connecticut has had a "long, checkered, and in many ways shamefully suppressive" history with voting rights, but bills like S.B. 470 will continue to expand voting rights "and make it as accessible as possible" so that "we can move forward with a strong electorate and truly democratic elections." S.B. 470 would mark a "step toward making

Connecticut's antiquated voting systems more accessible to all who are eligible to vote;" therefore, ACLU-CT supports S.B. 470 "wholeheartedly."

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**David Godbout:** Does not support any bills.

### **Anna Posniak and Antoinette Spinelli, Co-Chairs, Connecticut Town Clerks**

**Association (CTCA):** While the Connecticut Town Clerks Association "understands and shares" the Committee's concerns "over the rejection of absentee ballots" and "support the measures to improve the electoral process so that no voter is disenfranchised," the CTCA believes that the "requirements in Sec. 2 [of S.B. 470] are unworkable and creates other issues." Additionally, the CTCA believes that the requirements outlined in the second section of S.B. 470 "would come at a cost to the municipalities since they would likely have to hire additional workers," and "Sec. 2 of the bill does not provide statutory authority to disregard the statement previously signed by the voter." Therefore, while the CTCA believes that the language of S.B. 470 is "well intended, it could result in a voter's disenfranchisement and possible litigation." In conclusion, the CTCA urges the Committee to "delete Section 2...from the bill and in turn work to reform our current absentee ballot system to make it more user friendly for the electorate."

### **Mary Consoli, Coordinator of Voter Service, League of Women Voters (LWV) Northern**

**Fairfield Chapter:** As someone that "works actively on Election Day," Mary Consoli "could not possibl[y] take on another task, as worthy as it may be." From the perspective of someone that "take[s] an absentee ballot to a voter who has suddenly become unable to vote in person," what S.B. 470 "is asking to do is not practical to administer." Therefore, while Ms. Consoli agrees that there should be "a process in place to cure rejected absentee ballots," the Committee should "seriously consider the recommended changes" to S.B. 470 as outlined by Pua Ford of the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, and continue to "work with experienced election officials to identify a practical and effective process to implement it."

### **Pua Ford, Public Issues Team, League of Women Voters (LWV) of Connecticut:**

While the League of Women Voters of Connecticut "applaud[s] the intent to cure a rejected absentee ballot," the methods outlined in S.B. 470 are "seriously flawed." Therefore, the League recommends that the Committee revise S.B. 470 "in consultation with Registrars of Voters and Town Clerks," in order for the process "to be practicable on Election Day." The League also recommends that the Committee "work with experienced elections officials to identify a practical and effective process and implement it," and "In the meantime, the League will continue our work alerting voters on the correct use of absentee ballots and any updates to election laws."

### **Chris Prue, President, Registrar of Voters Association of Connecticut (ROVAC):**

The Registrar of Voters Association of Connecticut argues that there are "several areas of concern regarding" Section 2 of S.B. 470. For example, the language of the second section of S.B. 470 "gives an unfair advantage to endorse candidates during Primary Elections," and it "opens the door for confusion and possible disenfranchisement of voters due to a lack of changes that would need to be purposed for voters who attempt to request and cast a corrected ballot on Election Day." Therefore, ROVAC urges the Committee to "remove" Section 2 of S.B. 470 because, though "well intended," this language would give an unfair

advantage to electors who have chosen to affiliate with the two major parties [versus] those who choose to affiliate with a minor party or with no political party at all." ROVAC remains "more than willing to work with" the Committee to "strengthen elections in Connecticut," and "to create JFS language should the Committee wish to do so on this pending legislation."

**Reported by: Austin Hyatt**

**Date: 3/29/2022**