

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5004

Title: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING.

Vote Date: 3/15/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/22/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

During the 2022 elections, a constitutional amendment was passed in Connecticut to allow for early voting, this bill explains the implementation and of early voting, as to allow for two full weeks of early voting, in an effort to provide more accessible ways to vote and increase voter engagement. This bill was amended to also allows for 4 days of early voting for special elections and referenda.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State, Secretary of the State's Office submitted testimony in support of most aspects of the bill, particularly the framework for implementation. She testified saying that the state has to provide all funds in relation to early voting and that the bill needs to be passed before the end of March in order to provide enough time to be ready for the 2023 elections. She noted two specific reservations for this bill. This bill allows for 14 days of voting and her office is recommending 10. She also noted that early voting cannot and should not include referendums and special elections.

Werner Oyanadel, Latino and Puerto Rican Policy Director, CWCSEO testified that the commission is agnostic on the time period in which early voting will be offered. They asked that the state fully fund all aspects of early voting, as well as a large public education campaign to educate voters and poll workers on how early voting will work. They also affirmed their support for early morning and evening hours to accommodate different work schedules.

Representative Vincent Candelora, House Minority Leader, House Republican Caucus

testified that he would like to see early voting be three days, which he notes, still includes a weekend. He also opposes that early voting apply to referendum.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Yvonne Senturia, Election Law Specialist, League of Women Voters of Connecticut

testified in support of the bill and agreed with almost all aspects of the early voting bills, including, implementation, funding, and necessity. However she specifically asked for at least two full weeks of early voting.

Randy Collins, Advocacy Manager, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities

agreed with the SOTS on which elections should be included and how early voting should be funded . He also asked that the state include more help and guidelines for municipalities.

Gemeem Davis and Callie Gale Heilmann, Co-Directors, Bridgeport Generation Now Votes

requested at least three weeks of early voting.

Timothy De Carlo, Chairman, ROVAC Legislative Committee

concurred with the SOTS that referenda elections should not be included in early voting. He also asked that the SOTS office be involved in choosing the voting locations and a number of other clerical items in regards to administration of early voting.

Mendi Blue Paca, President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation

noted the importance that early voting include weekends and evenings, in order to allow more flexibility for people who don't have very flexible schedules.

Robin Druckman, Chair, Democratic City Committee of Stamford

testified that they believe early voting should apply to all elections, including referendums. He also asked for polling locations be proportionate to population and that same-day registration include the early voting period

Yanidsi Velez, New England Regional Director, Hispanic Federation

emphasized the importance of early voting in minority communities. She also emphasized that polling locations are accessible and available to those who are handicap, use public transportation, and/or do not drive. She also echoed the point that early morning and evening hours also be required.

Joseph Bobrow

testified that it is the obligation of a democratic system to make voting as easy as possible for its voters.

Michael Carrington

noted that while he appreciates having more days, he believes over all access (total hours) matters more than the amount of days.

Jane Cavanaugh

shared a personal story of how, last October, her husband became ill and their ability to use an absentee ballot during COVID. She expressed her appreciation for absentee ballots for her and her husband and emphasized that having voting be accessible for people who are busy or ill is important.

The following individuals submitted testimony in support of HB-5004. They cited reasons similar to those stated in the aforementioned testimonies:

Paula Bacolini, Founder, Make Voting Easy-Ct
Nicole Sanclemente, Policy Manager, CWEALF
Kathleen Callahan, Co-Chair, NASW
Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU-CT
Michael Bailey, Executive Director, UConn-AAUP
Diana Evans, Advisor, Common Cause
Stacey Zimmerman, Associate Director, SEIU CT
Ed Hawthorne, President, CT AFL-CIO
John Erlingheuser, Senior Advocacy Director
Coralys Santana, Policy and Program Associate, The Connecticut Project Action Fund
John Brady, Executive Vice President, AFTCT
Brian Donahue, Founding Member, NJU
Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer, Sierra Club Connecticut
Deena Allard
Janet Bellamy
Joelle Berger
Leslie Blank
Robert Blank
Bobbi Essagof
Richard Boritz
Deborah Brody
Linda Bronstein
Joanne Cafiero
Deborah Calloway
Marilyn Carroll
Martin Cobern
David Cohen
Queenie Collins
Thomas Connolly
Mary Consoli
Sharon Conway
Ruth Cook
Laura Copland
Sarah Curry
Martha Daniels
Jennifer Dayton
Aziz Dehkan, Executive Director, CT Roundtable on Climate and Jobs
Christine Denning
Nancy DiNardo
Cathleen Donnelly
Cynthia Dul
Doris Dumas
Barbara Edinburg
Susan Edmands
Karen Edwards

Lawrence Edwards
Elizabeth Eldridge
Richard Eldridge
Riley Elliot
Alana Ervin
Vera Esdaile
Win Evarts
Patrick Farley
Terry Fitzgerald
Kathy Flaherty, Executive Director, Connecticut Legal Rights Project
Pua Ford
Seth Freeman
Robert Fritsch
Timothy Gabriele
Alfreda Gaither
Cheryl Galloway
Sarah Ganong
Alexandra Garcia
Christine Gianquinto
Mark Goldstein
Lauren Gray
Rosemarie Greco
MaryAnn Guglielmo
Ashley Gulyas
Josh Guo
Jim Gustin
Nancey Halpert
Leanne Harpin
Mary Kathryn Harrity
Maureen Harry
Marie Hayes
Jaclyn Kusluch Hebron
Winston Heimer, Executive Vice President Connecticut Alliance for Retired Americans
Laurie Heiss
Emma Hersom
Sally Hill
Harald Hillie
Jenny Hillie
Beth Hillson
Tione Hoeckner
Baylay Hoehne
Patricia Holloway
Annie Hornish
Damian Humphrey
Nancy Hutchinson
Lynne Ide
Sondi Jackson
Catherine Jacobson
Bessie Jefferson

Joanne Steinhart
Diane Jamieson
Jacqueline Johnson
Brian Kabcenell
Jackie Kaiko
Roslyn Kaplan
Lisa Kelly
Jody Kesten
Mary Lee Kiernan
Nicole Klein
William Knoegel
Alex Knopp
Roy Kohavi
Edward Koistinen
Julianna Larue
Andrea Levine
Yaz Liow
Angela Liptack
Elizabeth Litt
Janet Luongo
William Marut
John Matz
Susan Mazur
Barbara Mechler
Paola Milbank
Caroline Miller
Michele Millham
Kathleen Misset
Danielle Moghadam
Meredith Molyneux
Leslee Asch Morrison
Carole Mulready
Arlene Murphy
Erika Murphy
Deborah Murray
Georgia Newcomb
Adrienne Parkmond
Tameeka Parks
Jonathan Perloe
Alvaro Perpuly
Joyce Petteway
Nerlyn Pierson
Jeffery Pitler
Halina Platt
Emma Polinsky
Merla Poter
Kathleen Powers
Linda Pryde
Charlotte Pyle

Laly Rakotoniaina
Jacqueline Randolph
Carol Rizzolo
Lawrence Rizzolo
Katherine Roberts
Maia Roothaan
Abigail Roth
Pegeen Rubinstein
Patricia Saavedra
David Sales
Alison Sanchirico
Judith Sanchirico
Thomas Sanchirico
Helen Sandalls
Alison Scherer
David and Marge Schneider
Noam Schonfeld
Jeffery Schwartz
Charmaine Seavy
Chris Senecal
Karen Siegel
Susan Singer
Pat Sirulnick
Celia Smith
Judith Sparer
Kenneth Speyer
Patricia Spruance
Stephen Stern
Tom Stewart
Judy Sullivan
Sarah Sullivan
Lynn Taborsak
Christian Thomas
Ellen Thomson
Karen Tracy
Andrew Tran
Yvonne Tuttle
Yann van Heurck
Roseann Ventimiglia
Herman Vogel
Vicki Volper
Amber Walsh
Claire Walsh
David Walsh
Marilyn Walsh
Carol Waxman
Leslie Weinberg
Irene Weiss
Sherry Wernicke

Lisa Wiesner
Dean Williams
Steven Winter
Travis Woodward
Linda Youn
Steve Zales

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns agreed with the need for early voting but, citing the cost and staffing limitations, asked that the time period be shortened to 5 days.

Katherine Briggs, Democratic Registrar of Voters and Margaret Villani, Republican Registrar of Voters, and Kenneth Kellogg, First Selectman, Town of Monroe all echoed the above reservations regarding the possibly detrimental costs to small towns and cited similar issues with chain of custody, CT Voters Registration System (CVRS), tabulators, and finding locations. They emphasized the importance of updating CVRS.

Donna Rusgrove, Registrar of Voters, Town of Burlington asked that the hosting of early voting, financial burden, and outdated systems all be seriously investigated and considered. She explained that in Burlington, they have one voting location, the auditorium of town hall, and that it would be impossible to occupy it constantly for a week or more. She also expressed concerns over CVRS and the current tabulators, both of which are outdated.

Cynthia Bruno, Registrar of Voters, Town of Ridgefield asked that the state to do a thorough study including state election law, funding and implementation before going forward to lessen the burden on ROVs and municipalities. She referenced a possible conflict in early voting and current election law, in regards to registration deadlines and election personnel.

Matthew Katra, Registrar of Voter, Borough of Naugatuck noted, as well as many of his other colleagues, that many ROVs are often part time and have full time jobs outside of being a ROV, and early voting, especially a long period, like in HB-5004, could lead to many seasoned ROVs having to resign.

Luther Weeks, Executive Director, Connecticut Voters Count noted that his main issue with the bill was that a lot of ballot storage and security measures are ambiguous or lacking. In his testimony he goes into detail with specific language, particularly that all audits be handled by the UConn Audit Station, in order to save municipalities time and money.

Debbie Esposito was concerned that language included in the bill was vague and that it would possibly change CT to an open primary state.

Toni Doubleday testified that time period should depend on municipality, and note that finding partisan election workers to properly staff each day could become a challenge.

Others testified similarly citing cost as the main issue, and no-excuse absentee as an already existing and/or better option. Including but not limited to:

Matthew Waggner, Registrar of Voters, Town of Fairfield
Cara Gately, Registrar of Voters, Town of Darien
Wendy Gannon Lionetti, Town Clerk, Town of Ridgefield
Paula Cofrancesco, First Selectman, Town of Bethany
Marcel Lessard
Peter Wrampe
Jean Rabinow
Susan Bradford
Carol Cangiano, who also requested that election day be a state holiday.
Maureen Ciardiello
Bob Carney, who asked that the days be shortened to ten.
Timothy Clark
Michael Criss, First Selectman, Town of Harwinton
Susan Devokaitis, Registrar of Voters, Town of Pomfret, who also pointed out that the deadline to register to vote would have to be moved, which could disenfranchise voters.
LeReine Frampton and Erica Canfield, Registrar of Voters, Town of Newtown
Samuel Gold, Executive Director, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments
Ellen Jacob
Anne Manusky
Philip Murphy
Lisa Pojano
Katherine Sarris
Richard Shea
Amberly Wang
Melanie Young

While others were simply opposed to the idea of early voting. Including but not limited to:

Charles Baugh
Cora Blancato
Linda Dalesssio
Jennifer Damon
Robyn DiNatale
Joan Finman
Edward Maccio
John Pepper

Reported by: Jonathan Lukasiewicz

Date: 3/15/2023