

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1057
AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND EARLY
Title: VOTING.
Vote Date: 03/15/2023
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:

This Bill seeks to establish a program of early voting in the state of CT beginning in 2023 for certain elections, primaries, and for the 2024 general election, with the exclusion of referenda. This comes about after the passage of Question #1 with a 60% majority in 2022 referendum allowing for the Connecticut General Assembly to amend the State Constitution to allow for early voting. This Bill also seeks to establish the number of days and hours for early voting, and implement procedures for the conduct of, such early voting, proposing a ten-day voting period, concluding the Sunday before the election. As well as a shorter early voting period for special elections, consisting of four days. The hours put forth by this Bill shall be 10:00am-6:00pm, including two days in which early, and late hours would be implemented. The system for storing, transporting, and holding early voting ballots cited in this bill shall also be like that of the process for storing, transporting, and holding absentee ballots as well. This bill also makes conforming changes to deadlines for the performance of certain duties prior to an election or primary. This bill also requires the Secretary of the State to undertake efforts to educate the public about the early voting process and train registrars of voters regarding the administration of the early voting process.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of State, Office of The Secretary of State: The Secretary of State expressed her support for S.B-1057, approving of the ten-day period expressed in S.B-1057 over both the H.B-5004's proposed fourteen-day voting period and S.B-1064

proposed eighteen-day voting period. The Secretary supports the ten-day voting period because as she states. "Long term data from other states suggest that a longer period of early voting does not lead to increased turnout. Voters generally utilize early voting during two high-traffic periods, the first couple of days it is available and again as the election closes in". She also makes note of the financial costs to municipalities and the physical toll early voting takes upon poll workers. This ten-day period includes two full weekends as voters requested time on weekends to vote early. Secretary Thomas also notes that she supports early voting for primary and general elections, but not special elections as the burden it would place upon municipalities is far too great. To conclude her testimony, she urges to provide funding for municipalities to conduct early voting and all the training and logistical support for the staff members that would be required.

Werner Oyanadel, CWCSEO Latino & Puerto Rican Policy Director, and Megan Baker, CWCSEO Commission Analyst for the Asian Pacific-American Affairs:

The Commission offered their support for the concept introduced by SB-1057 and other early voting bills, stating that members of the assembly are responding to the "will of the voters of Connecticut". While the commission is does not have a preference on a specific number of days and ours to encompass early voting. They do have some parameters they would to be set during the implementation process. They call for "(1) one weekend of early in person voting before Election Day. (2) an equitable distribution of locations so voters of color, disabled voters, and elderly voters have equal access to the polls; and (3) that such program incrementally include primaries, referendums, and general elections to its early voting process. (4) We also highly recommend that this new program is fully funded to adequately prepare for its effective implementation, which means that it should cover the costs of training materials, staff time, ballots and envelopes, chain of custody storage equipment, municipal technological upgrades, and any other incurred expenses".

Representative Vincent Candelora, House Republican Office: Representative Bernhard Opposes S.B-1057 but support limited aspects of it. Regarding early voting, they approve of early voting being limited to general election and primaries, stating that early voting being implemented into special elections would be too much of a burden upon municipalities logistically. The House Republican office also calls for a 3 day early voting period, including two weekdays and one weekend day totaling a 4-day voting period including election day, claiming this will allow municipalities to ease into the process of early voting.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Jess Zaccagnino, policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut:

Ms. Zaccaingo fully supports the passage of SB-1057. Beginning by noting how Connecticut has tended to fall behind in the area of voting rights, noting the history of the state itself, and previous implementations by former members of the CGA. This includes limiting the vote to Caucasians in 1818, waiting 6 years to further amend the state constitution after the passage of the 15th amendment, and using literacy tests into the 1960's. The ACLU-CT calls for two weeks of early voting days with the inclusion of one weekend, calling for a consistent number of daily hours, the inclusion of extended hours, and finally the distribution of early voting places both fairly and equitably.

Claire Walsh, Founding Member of Democracy Women in Action: Ms. Walsh states her unconditional support for all legislation that pushes for Early Voting or No Excuse Absentee Voting. She supports a ten to fourteen voting day period, polling places based upon geographical proportion and population, and funding for municipalities to implement said changes into the voting process. She also recalls her own commitment to the cause of early voting as being a "voice for the elderly, the disabled, the working poor, and all those who cannot speak for themselves. Some are weary and overwhelmed, working two or more jobs, walking, standing, waiting for public transportation to get them where they need to be, and trying to provide care for their children at the same time".

Karen Tracy: Ms. Tracy fully supports the implementation of early voting, and the passage of SB-1057. She also calls for a system of early voting that would take place over the course of 14 days, including weekends and weeknights. Ms. Tracy also calls for the adoption of mobile voting and the creation of Voting Centers, as well as calling for the adoption of the latest printing and scanning technology to be implemented into our voting process.

Wendy Gannon Lionetti, Town Clerk of Ridgefield: Ms. Lionetti supports the passage of SB-1057 but does ask that members of this committee and members of the legislature consider the financial burden and logistical efforts that must be made in order to maintain a system of early voting. She also seeks to inform members of the committee and members of the legislature that many town Registrars are part time positions and will have to hire and train additional personnel in order to support this system. She does recognize that voters in the state of CT voted to approve the implementation of early voting but asks that the state be deliberate and pass legislation that instills confidence in the election and encourages an information campaign to inform both voters and civil servants on the topic of early voting.

Sarah Ganong, State Director, Working Families Power, Member of the Recovery for All Coalition: Ms. Ganong calls for implementation of early voting after nearly sixty percent of residents voted in support of it in the latest referendum. Ms. Ganong calls for the passage of this bill along with the resources and time for the proper implementation of early voting into all municipalities. She also asks that the bill set time aside for nights and weekends to be implemented and made available for voters.

Aziz Dehkan, Executive Director, Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs: The Roundtable Fully supports the passage of SB-1057 believing that "Democracy only works when citizens can participate. Strong voting rights are essential for a healthy democracy". The Roundtable recognizes that some individuals are unable to fully express their right to vote on election day for a multitude of reasons such as "Inflexible work schedules, lack of access to transportation, childcare duties, business or personal travel, medical conditions, and disabilities" or any other reason. The Roundtable believes that the implementation of early voting will alleviate this problem and make voting accessible to all.

Kathleen Callahan, Co-Chair, National Association of Social Workers Connecticut

Chapter's Education and Legislative Action Network: Kathleen Callahan expressed full support for the passage of SB-1057 on behalf of the Connecticut chapter. They state that "any restriction on the right to vote is unacceptable" and thank members of the assembly for seeking to protect and expand this right. The chapter believes that no judgment should be placed on individuals who are unable to vote on election day for one reason or another and call for the implementation of early voting into Connecticut elections, citing it will "decrease racial discriminatory practices that continue to this day". The chapter also urges legislators to fully fund municipalities so that they may implement these changes into their election process.

Mendi Blue Paca, President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation: The Community foundation supports the passage of SB-1057, asking that eligible voters in the state of Connecticut who wish to cast their ballot early be able too. The Foundation notes that residents "Particularly Adults in Low Income Families" do not always have time to cast their ballot on election day, and by implementing ample time for early voting, Connecticut can ensure every eligible voter has the opportunity to "make their voice heard". The Foundation also recognizes the extreme logistical and financial burden placed upon municipalities to implement early voting and calls upon the legislature to allocate funds and resources to these municipalities for the implementation of early voting.

Joelle Berger: Joelle Berger expressed conditional support for SB-1057, citing their strong support for the concept of early voting itself, calling it "embarrassing" that Connecticut is one of only four states that does not offer early voting options. However, Joelle Berger strongly encouraged fourteen days of absentee voting, and at least two full weekends and early voting for all elections including Municipal, Special and referendum. Joelle Berger also called for funding for all municipalities to implement early voting, and public education on the principal of early voting.

Paula Bacolini, Founder and Leader, Make Voting Easy-CT: Ms. Bacolini offered strong support for the passage of SB-1057, citing the flexibility it gives to families as a major reason for support. She also notes her own situation as a senior citizen with health problems that, if possible, she would like to vote on a day with "good weather" and avoid long lines.

The following individuals submitted testimony in support of SB-1057. They cited reasons similar to those stated in the aforementioned testimonies:

Deena Allard
Michael Bailey, Executive Director, UConn-AAUP
Janet Bellamy
Leslie P. Blank
Robert P. Blank
Joseph Bobrow
Richard Boritz
John Brady, AFTCT, Executive Vice President
Dr. Warren Bratter
RN. Deborah Brody

Linda Bronstein
Wanda Bubriski
Deborah Calloway
Michael Carrington
Martin E. Cobern
Queenie Collins
Thomas Connolly
Sharon Conway
Ruth Cook
Jennifer Dayton
Sarah Curry
The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
Marta Daniels
Gemeem Davis, President & Co-Director, Bridgeport Generation Now Votes
Cynthia Dul
Doris Dumas
Vera DeBrito-Esdaile
Lawrence Edwards PhD
Elizabeth Eldridge
Phyllis Elperin
Diana Evans member of the Advisory Board of Common Cause
Win Evarts
Patrick A. Farley
Stephanie FitzGerald
Kathleen Flaherty, Executive Director, Ct Legal Rights Project
Ruth Freedman
Seth Freeman
Timothy Gabriele
Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer
Alfreda Gaither
Callie Gale Heilmann, Co-Director Bridgeport Generation Now Votes
Cheryl Gatling-Galloway
Christine Gianquinto
Maureen Gilfeather
Mark Goldstein
Lauren Gray
Rosemarie Greco
MaryAnn Guglielmo
Ashley Gulyas
Jim Gustin
Marie Hawe
Ed Hawthorne, President Connecticut AFL-CIO
Marie R Hayes
Jaclyn Kusluch, Hebron
Bayly Hoehne Chair of Connecticut High School Democrats, Voters of Tomorrow
Patricia Holloway
Annie Hornish
Damian Humphrey
Sondi Jackson

Catherine Jacobson
Diane Jamieson
Joanne Steinhart
Brian Kabcenell
Jackie Kaiko
Jody Kesten
Mary Lee A. Kiernan President & CEO, YWCA Greenwich
Nicole Klein
Edward Koistinen
Andrea Levine
Angela Liptack
Elizabeth Litt
Jacqueline Masumian
John Matz
Susan Mazur
Barbara Mechler
Caroline Miller
Gary S. Starr, Chair, JCRC, Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford
Leslee Asch Morrison
Carole Mulready
Arlene Murphy
Erika Murphy
Deborah Howland-Murray
Elizabeth Nagurney
Jeffrey Pitler
Halina Platt
Merla Porter, Retired CT school teacher
Kathleen Powers, Member, of CT Shoreline Indivisible
Linda Pryde
Charlotte Pyle
Laly Noya Rakotoniaina,
Jacqueline Randolph
Carol Rizzolo
Professor Lawrence Rizzolo
Patricia Rossi Vice President for Advocacy and Public Issues LWVCT
Pegeen Rubinstein
Patricia C Vener-Saavedra
David Sales
Alison Sanchirico
Judith Sanchirico
Thomas Sanchirico
Helen Milo Sandalls
Coralys Santana
Alison V. Scherer
David and Marjorie Schneider
Jeffrey Schwartz
Charmaine Seavy
Yvonne Senturia, Election Law Specialist, LWVCT
Susan, Singer

Pat Sirulnick
Celia Smith
Donald Smith
Judith Sparer
Kenneth Speyer
Stephen and Marion Stern
Tom Stewart, Director of Policy, Secure Democracy USA
Ellen Thomson
Yvonne Tuttle
Roseann Ventmiglia, PhD
Alex Villamil
Herman Vogel
Vicki Volper
Joan Weisman, Registrar of Voters
Amber Walsh
Sherry Wernicke
Steve Zales
Travis Woodward
Emma Hersom

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Carol P. Cangiano: Carol Cangiano stated her staunch opposition to all pieces of legislation that seek to implement early voting. She states how residents of the "Great state of Connecticut have voted successfully on one day, Election Day for the past several hundred years". While she does support the implementation of absentee ballots for those unable to attend the polls on election day, she is against all exit polling, early polling and electronic voting, because as she states, "It is known to be hackable". She also calls for the results of an election to be available withing 24-48 hours.

Taxpayer, Linda Dalessio: Ms. Dalessio states opposition to the passage of SB-1057, stating many problems with the bill as well as its concept. She first states that the bill's language is "Confusing and Unclear". She then claims that Connecticut does not have systems currently available to sustain a ten-to-eighteen-day voting period, and that municipalities lack the resources to maintain these systems. She also states how the entire United States voting system is fraught with fraud. She concludes her list of reasoning by saying that designating locations for early voting does not fall within the preview of the register of voters and that it should not.

Lisa Pojano Certified State Election Moderator: Ms. Pojano States her opposition to SB-1057, stating many issues that would arise from the adoption of early voting. First, she states that early voting does not require nearly the same number of staff required on election day

and that the lack of staff officials removes the system of checks and balances that is currently in place to preserve the integrity of the election. Secondly, she states that, the logistics of the implementation of early voting is untenable and "Short Cuts" may be taken to achieve this task. She concludes by asking members of the legislature and the committee to oppose SB-1057 to preserve election integrity and prevent voter disenfranchisement.

Dominic Rapini, Connecticut certified Election Day Moderator, Former candidate for Secretary of The State: Mr. Rapini states his opposition against SB-1057, beginning by noting the vast differences in Connecticut voting infrastructure compared to other states. He lists that Connecticut's election officials are nearly 80% part time workers, compared to full time election officials in other states. He then states that while other states have county-based elections, Connecticut has one for every single one of their 169 towns. And finally concluding that other states not only have dedicated locations for elections, but have lower infrastructure costs, while Connecticut is nearly facing a 591k daily cost for each day of early voting. And finally, Mr. Rapini calls for two days of early voting and implement it only for general elections. He concludes his testimony by asking that we "walk before we run".

Charles Baugh: Mr. Baugh urges members of the committee to oppose early voting, and any voting by individuals who are not U.S. citizens. Mr. Baugh sees no need for additional days of early voting when absentee voting is available and election day has been held on a single day for many years prior.

Timothy Clark: Mr. Clark opposes this bill, calling for 5 days of early voting instead of the proposed bill's amount. Mr. Clark states that absentee voting is available 45 days before an election, and early voting on top of that would be too expensive and would be unnecessary. Mr. Clark also believes this will lead to additional voter fraud.

Cora Blancato: Ms. Blancato believes that before any changes are made to the election process, the voter rolls should be cleaned up. She notes that there are far too many unanswered questions to the voters, and that it is deceptive.

Susan Bradford: Ms. Bradford opposes SB-1057, noting that members of the general assembly and the state do not understand the financial and volunteer burden they are placing upon individuals regarding early voting.

Nancy Comeau: Ms. Comeau opposes SB-1057, believing that polls on election day are open early enough, and close late enough for all, and that early voting would open the door to miscounts and errors in the process.

Joan Finman: Ms. Finman opposes early voting in the country, and cites strong opposition to early voting in the State of Connecticut.

The following individuals submitted testimony in Opposition of SB-1057. They cited reasons similar to those stated in the aforementioned testimonies:

Maureen Ciardiello

Jennifer Damon
Mark Lloret
Edward Maccio
Richard Mayhew
Kathleen Misset
Donna Rusgrove, Registrar of Voters
Sarris, Katherine
Sharon Scarlet
Richard Shea
Amberley Wang
Melanie Attwater-Young

Reported by: Thomas Togneri

Date: 03-15-2023