

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1190

AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL ELECTION ADVISORS AND A TASK

Title: FORCE ON ELECTION ADMINISTRATION IN MUNICIPALITIES.

Vote Date: 3/24/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/10/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill seeks to rename "regional election monitors" as "regional election advisors", and to provide that a regional council of governments, or a combination of regional councils of governments and individual municipalities, be allowed to appoint regional election advisors for assistance with the performance of election administration duties, in order to ensure a more efficient election process. This bill also provides an annual grant to regional councils of governments that appoint a regional election advisor, in order to ensure this program is fully funded in all aspects. And finally, this bill establishes a task force to study means of ensuring election administration in municipalities is fully staffed by properly trained election officials, with the goal of furthering the efficiency in which elections are conducted.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of State, Office of The Secretary of state: Secretary of State Thomas and the office of the Secretary of state offer strong support for SB-1190, but respectfully request some minor alterations to section 5 of this bill believing that there are not enough members with expertise in the election process included and offer their expertise in working with the committee to create a roster that would offer workable results.

Representative Al Paolillo, 97th Assembly District Representative, Connecticut General Assembly: Rep. Paolillo offers his support for SB-1190, noting how this bill seeks to establish a task force to study election administration. While Rep. Paolillo supports this bill he does ask that changes be made to the task force on the topic of polling place change, asking that approval be required by local legislative bodies.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Galen W. Wells, previously Regional Election Monitor for WestCOG and for NVCOG, and Stuart W. Wells III, Registrar of Voters, City of Norwalk: Mr. Stuart Wells, and MR. Galen Wells offer support for SB-1190, but offer suggestions to for improvement. First, they ask that you allow a small group of qualified electors to be hired for the regional election advisor position as well as a single individual, stating that "A team of two or three (former registrars or election monitors, for example) working together, would be in much better position to help out towns in their COG, especially in the last few weeks of an election or primary event". Secondly, they ask that some provisions be included for administration fees.

The Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG): NECCOG notes their support for SB-1190, asking members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee to give it favorable consideration. NECCOG, then notes how they have benefited greatly from REM (Regional Election Monitors) and their services and note that they have been employing the REM with their own organization's funds, as state funding was only temporary, and they have been a valuable asset for the towns. NECCOG then notes that SB-1190 would maintain the work done by these REM's and concludes by noting the task force that would be created by the passage of this bill to study election administration.

Samuel S. Gold, Executive Director, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments: Mr. Gold notes his support for SB-1190, he notes how the democracy in the state of Connecticut is almost entirely reliant on volunteers, and how small municipalities give small stipends to these volunteers. He notes how this bill establishes a task force to help address this issue and notes further concerns which are faced by towns and small municipalities including technical transitions and lack of tech "Savy" volunteers and workers.

The following people submitted Testimony in support of SB-1190, they cited reasons similar to those in aforementioned testimony:

Carol Conklin, Regional election monitor, Rivercog
Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Matthew W. Hart, Executive Director, CRCOG

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Chris Prue, Registrar of Voters from the Town of Vernon, President of the Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut: Mr. Prue and ROVAC, note their opposition to SB-1190, stating how "this bill in essence duplicates what ROVAC and the Secretary of the State's office already do". Mr. Prue and ROVAC state that they believe this bill would place undue burden upon council governments and local municipalities. To conclude their testimony, Mr. Prue and ROVAC point out that the responsibilities assigned in this bill are already assigned to the Secretary of States office, and respectfully ask that this bill not be adopted.

Debbie Esposito: Ms. Esposito notes her opposition to SB-1190, believing in to be a "continued waste of taxpayers dollars and time".

Anonymous, Concerned Citizen: Anonymous Concerned Citizen opposes all bills.

Reported by: Thomas Togneri

Date: 03-24-2023