

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5311

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE COUNTING OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS.

**Vote Date:** 3/26/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/4/2024

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration & Elections Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would eliminate the marking of an absentee ballot to disclose the elector's identity as a reason to reject a ballot and would provide that only the last ballot received by a municipal clerk is counted. It also requires a municipal clerk to retrieve ballots from drop boxes at the close of the polls for an election, primary, or referendum.

The substitute language makes some minor revisions to the language of the bill.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Connecticut Secretary of The State: Requests that lines 93-95 be adjusted or that they be explained because they do not accomplish the overall goal of the bill. States that otherwise this bill would streamline the absentee ballot process for election workers by matching the absentee ballot requirements to those used for military ballots.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Antoinette Spinelli, Co-Legislative Chair, CT Town Clerks Association: Supports this bill because it will help clarify that the town clerk shall only count the last ballot they receive from an elector.

Yvonne Senturia, Dr, CT League of Women Voters: Supports this bill because it will help reduce disenfranchisement related to absentee ballots and improve voter representation.

Raymond Kelley: Supports this bill because it is a step towards restoring election integrity.

C Marcella Kurowski: Supports this bill because it establishes a stronger chain of custody and a more secure way of handling ballots. States that ballot drop-boxes are not needed because those who wish to vote absentee have ballots available to them.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

Luther Weeks: Opposes this bill because it would violate Section 5 of the Connecticut Constitution by interfering with the right to a secret ballot.

Terri McLaughlin: Opposes this bill and questions how much cheating has occurred in places without cameras, knowing what has happened in places with cameras.

Several individuals submitted testimony expressing concern with the use of ballot drop-boxes and support the requirement of Voter ID for all forms of voting and requiring a legal excuse for absentee voting.

These individuals include:

Beverly Allen  
Dawn Baldassarri  
Ralph Baldassarri  
Victor Burnett  
Carmel Castlevetro  
Kathryn Chester  
Susan Croce  
Deborah DeMusis  
Roy Downey  
Debbie Esposito  
Norma Ginz, Guilford RTC  
Isabelle Hargrove  
Rosemarie Hecht  
Coleen Kelly  
Gerard Kenney  
Tobie Meisel  
Daniel Mezick  
Nancy Monde  
Delia Skrainiski  
Carolyn Stands  
Susan Weber  
Jen Anonymously  
Sue Anonymous  
Several anonymous individuals

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

Vincent Candelora, House Republican Leader, House Republican Caucus: Comments that the committee should eliminate the use of absentee drop-boxes as they are no longer

necessary. States that drop-boxes are the most prone to abuse as shown by recent news and police surveillance footage showing boxes being used to commit election crimes.

Anne Manusky, President, CT Republican Assembly: Comments that recent issues with drop-boxes and fraud in Bridgeport has reduced the confidence that citizens have in the election system. States that the state must eliminate drop-boxes and establish a stronger chain of custody for absentee ballots.

**Reported by: Gabriel Marques, Assistant Clerk      Date: 4/3/2024**