

Planning and Development Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-227

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL INTERNET WEB SITES.

Vote Date: 3/15/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/28/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

SB 227 would require all municipalities in Connecticut to register a ".gov" internet domain. Many municipalities still maintain ".org" domains, and a .org address makes an account more susceptible to hacking and ransomware. The difference between the two domains is one of security. The .gov addresses are more secure and safer for the municipalities.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Bob Duff, Majority Leader, Senate](#)

Senator Duff stated that according to the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the benefits of a .gov address include the following: The .gov is a top-level domain (TLD) that was established to make it easy to identify US – based government organizations on the internet. Since it is only available to bona fide US – based government organizations, using it signals trust and credibility. The .gov registrar requires the use of 2-step verification for all users, and user accounts cannot use passwords that have been found in known data breaches. CISA, GSA and the National Institute of Standards and Technology help monitor for issues in the namespace.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

[Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns \(COST\)](#)

COST stated that CISA recently dropped the \$400 fee for obtaining a .gov domain to make it more accessible to municipalities and other governmental entities. Although migrating municipal websites to the .gov domain is a straightforward process, many small towns may not have the IT staff to readily accomplish this. CISA has made available grants to states to assist municipalities and other government agencies in addressing cybersecurity issues, which may include moving domains and email systems to the more secure .gov domain. This would be very helpful in ensuring that Connecticut's small towns can fully and easily comply with the bill, if it is adopted. They stated that they will be reaching out to the State and Local Cybersecurity Planning Committee for additional guidance on this matter as well as soliciting input from their members to ensure that there are not any concerns with the bill's requirements or the timeline for compliance.

[Samuel Gold, Executive Director, RiverCOG](#)

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of governments stated that although there are security benefits of having a .GOV domain, they decided not to pursue a switch at this time. The decision was driven by the need to change from rivercog.org to a new URL that included CT. The new address would be significantly different and upon realization of that fact, they stopped the process of obtaining a .GOV address. They listed multiple pros and cons, such as the .GOV domain suffix is strictly maintained; however, .GOV domains are not provided DNS services by the registrar. Changing from existing domains to the .GOV domain can be a real logistical and technological challenge. Depending on the available expertise in each municipality it can also become a very costly change.

[Zachary McKeown, Advocacy Manager, The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities \(CCM\)](#)

CCM acknowledged cybersecurity is paramount and may save municipalities money in the aggregate from increased protection, but they are concerned with the costs that will be incurred to transition websites and with the ability of communities to shift domains seamlessly. CCM recommends the committee provide additional flexibility to comply with this mandate by pushing the deadline to comply by July 1, 2027, rather than 2026 in order to budget for the costs and transition to the new domains in an orderly manner.

Reported by: Ashley Orser

Date: 3/18/24