

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-390

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING PENALTIES FOR CERTAIN ELECTION CRIMES.

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

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/13/2024

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

In order to discourage and prevent the occurrence of certain election crimes, the legislation aims to carry that certain specified penalty violations of election laws will include a penalty of a minimum term of imprisonment of twelve months, which shall not be suspended or reduced.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State:

Opposes the bill as written for reasons relating to the nature of penalties and whether they would have proportionate deterrent effect or apply for violations occurring without ill intent, mandatory minimum prison sentences and the potential for negatively impacting election worker recruitment, and the lack of public awareness as to what constitutes violation of the provisions of Title 9.

Jason Perillo, House Republican Caucus Deputy Minority Leader:

Offers support on behalf of the House Republican Caucus. History of election crime and punishment indicates patterns of penalties that include few small fines and suspended sentences. Election crimes harm the public, undermine the legitimacy of elections, and disenfranchise all voters. Without serious consequences, these crimes are unable to be prevented or deterred.

Michael Brandi, SEEC Executive Director:

Offers the Commission's full support.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Dawn Baldassarri, Supports:

Supports the contents of the bill and suggests all voting rights and eligibility to work for any election should be revoked for violations of electoral process.

Ralph Baldassarri, Supports:

Supports the contents of the bill and suggests all voting rights and eligibility to work for any election should be revoked for violations of electoral process.

Susan Bradford, Supports:

Supports, stating the importance of holding those who break the law accountable with sufficient consequences.

Kathryn Chester:

Offers support for strict consequences to safeguard elections.

Dr. Linda Dalessio:

Supports, but states there are several caveats missing. Particularly, a voter ID requirement would ensure only legal Connecticut residents are voting and the lack of this requirement allows and incentivizes election fraud. Provides an anecdote of her sister-in-law, a mental health client of the state, who has been the victim of voter identity fraud. Also suggests the removal of drop boxes.

Jennifer Damon:

Supports the bill but suggests it does not go far enough, particularly citing the use of ERIC to clean voter rolls, LHS to program tabulators, and the lack of Cast Vote Record review with audits. Suggests the use of paper ballots marked by electors in blue pen to be hand counted with voter ID.

Cynthia Dehner:

In support of holding those who commit voter fraud accountable.

Mary Eames:

Urges support, stating that those who commit crimes to dispute elections or harvest votes should be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

Nancy Eaton:

Supports, stating it is time for the General Assembly to impose meaningful penalties on all who are found guilty of committing election crimes.

Debbie Esposito:

Believes it is time to hold those tampering with elections accountable, starting with severe, enforceable penalties applying to any and all election crimes.

Daniel Gentile:

Supports due to the events in Bridgeport, those who interfere in the election process should be held accountable.

Lisa Gregory:

Supports the imposition of a mandatory one-year prison term for individuals found guilty of criminal election violations, citing incident in Bridgeport.

Lizmarie Kinslow:

States that holding individuals accountable for election crimes is past due. Raises concerns that this law would be ignored and not enforced but offers support.

Marilina Imperati:

In full support.

Lisa Jolley:

States the legislation is desperately needed.

Frederic Kaeser:

Supports, suggests recent absentee ballot fraud in Bridgeport must be considered a crime with significant penalties.

Marcella Kurowski:

Supports, tampering with elections cancels out ballots from registered voters.

Anne Manusky, CT Republican Assembly:

The bill would install proper penalties for certain criminal acts of voter fraud, which has been a concern for the people of Connecticut for years.

Doug O'Donnell:

Supports mandatory prison time for those committing election law violations, however, suggests the legislation may be improved by requiring a valid ID from all voters, eliminating ballot boxes, requiring proof of citizenship, and one day voting with limited exceptions including military, work travel, and health issues.

David Parent:

Supports the bill as a former Assistant Registrar. Suggests requiring in person elections and limited absentee ballots. Supports mandatory incarceration for conviction of election crimes as they cause harm to the public.

Jeffrey Perkins:

Supports, has zero confidence in the voting system.

Christine Rebstock:

Supports, stating loss of faith in accuracy and validity in elections, especially after incident in Bridgeport.

George Sarris:

Encourages strong support after the fraudulent activity in Bridgeport.

Jayne Sarris:

Urges passage of the bill.

Katherine Sarris:

Employed as an Election Official in Trumbull. Fraud in any election is a disenfranchisement to electors placing their votes in surrounding districts. The sentences and penalties for fraudulent activity neither deter nor carry out sufficient punishment. Urges forward movement of the bill as the guarantee of free and fair elections is a basic necessity in a democracy.

Suzan Sarris:

The fraud that took place in Bridgeport exemplifies the need for this bill to guarantee secure elections in CT.

Abbey Smith:

Supports and expresses concern about integrity of Connecticut's voting process. CT voters will be silenced if those that tamper with the election process are not punished.

Nicholas Smith:

Supports, stating that anyone who works to undermine free elections and subsequently robs citizens of their voice should be punished.

*5 Anonymous individuals also expressed support.*

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

Jess Zaccagnino, ACLU-CT, Opposes:

Opposes on behalf of efforts to end mass incarceration, as no empirical evidence suggests increasing criminal penalties have proportionate effect or that mandatory minimums are effective. When applied to election workers and first-time offenders, this will likely deter civic participation in elections rather than prevent crime.

Also Opposes:

Jermaine Cruz

Glenn Fuoco

Kristyn D'Amato

Nicholas D'Amato

#### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

Tom Swan, CCAG Executive Director:

Shares concerns about election fraud but cannot support such a broadening of the use of mandatory minimum sentencing. Open to increasing penalties and other reforms such as increased funding for SEEC.

**Reported by: Lindsay de Brito**

**Date: 4/3/24**