
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6325

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE, ABSENTEE BALLOTS AND ELECTION AUDITS.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a (1) task force to study the feasibility of implementing procedures under which absentee ballot applicants return absentee ballots using one envelope, instead of two, and (2) working group to examine risk-limiting audits and oversee a related pilot program, within available appropriations, in five to 10 municipalities for the 2021 municipal elections.

The bill also moves up the deadline by which minor parties must file a copy of their party rules with the secretary of the state, from at least 60 days to at least 180 days, before nominating candidates for office. "Party rules" include any amendments to them.

By law, minor parties must nominate candidates and certify the list of candidates no later than 62 days before the election (e.g., September 20, 2020) (CGS § 9-452). A copy of the party rules must be on file with the secretary by the deadline in order for a nominated candidate's name to appear on the official ballot.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 1 — TASK FORCE ON ABSENTEE BALLOT ENVELOPES

The bill establishes a 12-member task force to study the feasibility of implementing procedures under which absentee ballot applicants return absentee ballots using one envelope, instead of two. The study must examine and identify each section of the general statutes that requires amending to implement these procedures.

Membership

Under the bill, the task force consists of the following members:

1. the secretary of the state, or her designee;
2. one member each appointed by the Senate president pro tempore, House speaker, and Senate and House minority leaders;
3. one member each appointed by the Government Administration and Elections Committee chairpersons and ranking members;
4. two members, enrolled in different political parties, appointed by the president of the Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut; and
5. one member appointed by the president of the Connecticut Town Clerks Association.

Initial appointments must be made no later than 30 days after the bill's passage. Legislative appointments may be legislators and appointing authorities fill vacancies. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must select the task force chairpersons from among its members.

Meeting, Staff, and Reporting

The bill requires the chairpersons to hold the task force's first meeting no later than 60 days after the bill's passage. The Government Administration and Elections Committee administrative staff serve as the task force's administrative staff.

By January 1, 2022, the task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Government Administration and Elections Committee. It terminates on that date or when it submits the report, whichever is later.

§ 2 — WORKING GROUP ON RISK-LIMITING AUDITS

The bill establishes a 12-member working group on risk-limiting audits. The group's purpose is to (1) look at using risk-limiting audits to determine the accuracy of election results and (2) oversee a pilot program, within available appropriations, in five to 10 municipalities

on one or more risk-limiting audit methods for the 2021 municipal elections.

As part of its work, the working group must at least examine the following:

1. the feasibility of implementing risk-limiting audits;
2. different methods used in these audits and the practical considerations for implementing each method within Connecticut's existing statutory framework; and
3. procedures, potential equipment, and changes to the statutory framework necessary to implement one or more of these methods.

Membership

Under the bill, the working group consists of the following members:

1. the secretary of the state, or her designee;
2. one member each appointed by the Senate president pro tempore, House speaker, and Senate and House minority leaders;
3. two members, enrolled in different political parties, appointed by the Government Administration and Elections Committee chairpersons and ranking members;
4. two members appointed by the secretary of the state, one with election law expertise and admitted to practice law in Connecticut, and the other a statistician;
5. two members, enrolled in different political parties, appointed by the president of the Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut; and
6. the director of UConn's Center for Voting Technology Research,

or the director's designee.

Initial appointments must be made no later than 30 days after the bill's passage. Legislative appointments may be legislators and appointing authorities fill vacancies. The secretary of the state, or her designee, serves as the chairperson.

Meeting, Staff, and Reporting

The bill requires the secretary of the state, or her designee, to hold the task force's first meeting no later than 60 days after the bill's passage. The Government Administration and Elections Committee administrative staff serve as the task force's administrative staff.

By January 31, 2022, the working group must report its findings and recommendations to the Government Administration and Elections Committee and to the secretary of the state. It terminates on that date or when it submits the report, whichever is later.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 1 (03/31/2021)