

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-431

AN ACT CONCERNING REFERENDA, INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES AND

**Title:** CERTAIN OTHER POLITICAL SPENDING.

**Vote Date:** 3/28/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/18/2022

**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:

General Government and Elections

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This is comprehensive legislation that pertains to referendum and election law. The bill seeks to prevent foreign interference in referendums and elections and to implement federal court and Supreme Court rulings. It also more clearly defines referendum spending as an independent spending and imposes attribution requirements for forms of referendum spending. It requires for organization spending only the disclaimer for the paying committee and not the individual disclaimer of all the candidates mentioned.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Mr. Michael Brandi, Executive Director and General Council, State of Connecticut**

**Elections Enforcement Commission:** They offered testimony in support of this bill. The bill will improve our campaign finance law in anticipation of the constitutional question that will appear on this year's November ballot and will include the adoption of a ban on contributions by foreign nationals. It also contains some updates to Connecticut statutes that will reflect rulings in the US Supreme Court and Second Circuit cases made in 2013 and 2014. These include foreign spending, independent expenditures, aggregate limits, referendum clarifications and upgrades, attribution fixes and an organizational expenditure fix.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Ms. Pamela Klem, Campaign Finance Specialist, League of Women Voters of**

**Connecticut:** They submitted testimony in support of this proposal. They believe that it will protect the integrity of our electoral processes.

**Mr. Alex Knopp, Common Cause, Connecticut:** (former Chairman of GAE 1999 – 2001) His comments were in support of this legislation. The new law is necessary because the states campaign finance laws contain a loophole that allows foreign persons and entities to spend foreign funds without limit to influence the outcome of state and local ballot referendums. Foreign spending could put our system of local grass-roots democracy at risk by threatening to drown out the voices of local voters. Enacting the intent of this bill to ban foreign contributions and expenditures by all foreign nationals and foreign owners is a giant step you can take now, on a bipartisan basis, to strengthen the integrity and enhance voter confidence in the outcome of ballot elections in our state.

The following constituents offered testimony in support of this bill indicating that we need to enact this legislation that will prohibit contributions by foreign nationals on Connecticut referendums. This bill will also improve campaign finance laws in preparation for this fall early voting ballot referendum and make updates that reflect US Supreme Court and other federal court rulings already in effect.

Joelle Berger, Westport; Gail Berrett, Westport; Tammy Conley, Ridgefield; Sarah Connolly, Woodbridge; Laura Copland, Ivoryton; Dori Dumas, New Haven; Karen Edwards, Stamford; Dawn Fuller, West Hartford; Herbert Glick, West Hartford; Win Heimer West Hartford; Rhonda Heisler, Bloomfield, Jordanna Hertz, West Hartford, Emily Hofstatter, West Hartford, Marget Holton, Norwalk; Monica Keady, Darien; Susan Leete, Guilford; Judy Lhamon, Hamden; Gloria Long, Hartford; Katherine Nelson, Groton; Elsa Peterson Obuchowski, Norwalk; Avi Ornstein, New Britain; Carol Reimers, Killingworth; Carol Rizzolo, Guilford; Larry Rizzolo, Guilford; Alisa Trachtenberg, Ridgefield; Judy Villa Cheshire and Jane Zande West Hartford

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Mr. David Godbout, Constituent:** He expressed opposition to all bills put forward by the committee under the claim of nullification.

**Reported by: Richard Ferrari, Assist. Clerk**

**Date: 3/28/22**