



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 481**

February Session, 2024

Substitute House Bill No. 5309

*House of Representatives, April 15, 2024*

The Committee on Government Administration and Elections reported through REP. BLUMENTHAL of the 147th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## **AN ACT CONCERNING BALLOTS MADE AVAILABLE IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 9-135b of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

3 (a) Immediately after the deadline for certification of all candidates  
4 whose names are to appear on the ballot, and in sufficient time to begin  
5 issuing absentee ballots on the day prescribed by law, the municipal  
6 clerk shall prepare the absentee ballots and have them printed. Prior to  
7 printing such ballots, (1) the registrars of voters of the municipality may  
8 provide comments concerning the content and form of such ballots to  
9 the clerk, and (2) in any municipality where federal or state law requires  
10 such ballots to be made available in a language or languages other than  
11 English, the clerk shall submit a sample of each such ballot to each  
12 member of the legislative body, or the board of selectmen in a  
13 municipality where the legislative body is a town meeting or

14 representative town meeting, who may provide comments concerning  
15 the translation of such language or languages to the clerk, provided the  
16 provision of comments under this subdivision shall not unduly delay  
17 the clerk's printing of such ballots in sufficient time to begin issuing such  
18 ballots on the day prescribed by law.

19 (b) A layout model of each different absentee ballot shall be available  
20 for public inspection at the clerk's office prior to printing. The model  
21 shall indicate the type face to be used, the spelling and placement of  
22 names and other information to be printed on the ballots.

23 (c) Immediately upon receiving the printed absentee ballots, the  
24 municipal clerk shall file one with the Secretary of the State or, if there  
25 are different ballots for different political subdivisions, one ballot for  
26 each subdivision. The clerk shall also file his affidavit with the Secretary,  
27 stating the number of ballots printed. The form of affidavit shall be  
28 prescribed by the Secretary. If any correction or alteration is  
29 subsequently made on any absentee ballot the clerk shall immediately  
30 file a corrected or altered ballot and, using the prescribed form, his  
31 affidavit stating the number of such ballots printed, with the Secretary.

32 (d) If a vacancy in candidacy occurs after the ballots have been  
33 printed, the clerk may either reprint the ballots or cause blank or printed  
34 stickers, as the case may be, to be affixed to them so that the name of any  
35 candidate who has vacated his candidacy is deleted and the name of any  
36 candidate chosen to fill the vacancy as provided in section 9-428 or  
37 section 9-460 appears in the same position as that in which the vacated  
38 candidacy appeared except as provided in section 9-426 or 9-453s.

39 (e) The Secretary of the State shall examine each absentee ballot  
40 required to be filed pursuant to this section and if a ballot contains an  
41 omission or error, the Secretary shall order the municipal clerk to reprint  
42 a corrected absentee ballot or to take such other action as the Secretary  
43 may deem appropriate.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>July 1, 2024</i>	9-135b
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**GAE**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:** None

**Municipal Impact:**

Municipalities	Effect	FY 25 \$	FY 26 \$
Various Municipalities	Cost	Potential	Potential

**Explanation**

This bill adds additional requirements in the approval of translated ballots for municipalities and results in a potential cost to municipalities.

The bill refers ballots to the town legislative body for review prior to printing. This will have a potential cost depending on if the town legislative body finds cause to have the ballot translated again. The potential cost depends on the number of municipalities that will need to re-translate their ballots<sup>1</sup>.

**The Out Years**

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation and the number of translations that are required.

<sup>1</sup> The cost to produce translated ballots is expected to be \$5,000 per document translated.

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**OLR Bill Analysis****sHB 5309****AN ACT CONCERNING BALLOTS MADE AVAILABLE IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH.****SUMMARY**

This bill requires that absentee ballots subject to translation requirements under federal or state law (see BACKGROUND) be submitted for municipal review. Specifically, it requires town clerks to give a draft of each ballot translation to the (1) members of the town's legislative body or (2) board of selectmen in a town where the legislative body is a town meeting. The members or board may provide comments to the clerk about the translations if this does not delay the clerk's printing of the ballots in time to issue them as the law requires.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

**BACKGROUND*****Voting Rights Act***

The federal Voting Rights Act generally requires certain municipalities to provide language assistance during elections for certain language minority groups based on specified English proficiency population thresholds. In Connecticut, 10 municipalities are currently federally required to provide this assistance (in Spanish).

The state's voting rights act also requires municipalities to provide language-related assistance based on specified population metrics. According to the secretary of the state's website, under the law, an additional 23 municipalities are currently required to provide language-related assistance (in Spanish).

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 16    Nay 3    (03/26/2024)