

Government Administration and Elections Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5448

AN ACT CONCERNING SECURITY OF CERTAIN ELECTION WORKERS AND

Title: ELECTIONS-RELATED LOCATIONS.

Vote Date: 3/22/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/13/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

In response to concerns for the safety of election workers and election-related locations, the legislation, as amended, aims to provide protection for such individuals by allowing certain election workers to request that their residential addresses be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, establishment of criminal prohibition of the possession of a firearm or weapon within a specified distance with certain exemptions, and establish criminal prohibition on, and civil cause of action for, threatening or harassing conduct toward election workers performing election-related duties.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State:

Offers support for the bill with certain recommendations regarding section 2, suggesting that language should be expanded to carve out private property with respect to the 1,000-foot area.

Michael Brandi, SEEC Executive Director:

Offers support.

Colleen Murphy, FOI Commission Executive Director:

The FOI Commission objects to the proposal, stating that it is overly broad and provides very little protection to those who seek nondisclosure.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kathryn Bonomi:

Election workers must be afforded the basic, common-sense protections outlined in the legislation. Election workers have been doxed on social media, harassed, and worse as times have changed. Urges support of the bill to ensure workers' safety and security of elections.

Christine Denning:

Providing a safe and secure election site is mandatory for citizens to vote and for election workers. In past elections, both voters and poll workers have been threatened and harassed. Believes that election workers should be protected from harassment and violence by allowing them to request their residential addresses be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, and that a perpetrator of voter or election worker harassment or possession of a firearm should be subject to criminal prosecution.

Helen Humphreys, CCAG Communications Coordinator:

CCAG stands in support of the bill. As many as one in six election officials have faced threats. Poll workers are government employees, their employer is responsible for their protection and safety. This legislation is a step toward protecting democracy and the individuals who carry the process out.

Lynne Ide, Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut:

The uptick of harassment and threatening behavior is a threat to the health and wellbeing of our democracy. It has become necessary to protect our election staff and polling places from threats and possible violence.

Sue Larsen, ROVAC:

States the bill represents a significant step toward safeguarding democracy by acknowledging the evolving landscape where harassment is becoming alarmingly common. Suppression of addresses of poll workers will offer some protection and the presence of lethal weapons near polling locations is unacceptable.

Julianna Larue, CTLCV:

In support, stating the dramatic increase in intimidation and harassment of election workers in recent years highlights the need for better protection, as these situations can lead to poll worker shortages and in turn, can cause polling locations to be closed or consolidated. CTLCV supports the establishment of criminal prohibitions on the possession of firearms or deadly weapons within one thousand feet of election-related locations, establishment of criminal prohibition on those threatening or harassing election workers, and the protection of election workers' residential addresses.

Merla Porter:

In 2024, there is an urgent need to protect the safety and security of all who work on our elections.

Linda Pryde:

Since 2020, election workers at all levels have experienced increasing threats, doxing, and harassment for doing their jobs. Connecticut should be proactive and join the fourteen states that have already enacted similar legislation.

Ann Reed, CT League of Women Voters:

Supports the protection of election workers and the bill's aim to protect identities and address of election workers, prohibition of the possession of firearms near polling locations, establishment of serious consequences for those who engage in harassment and threatening behavior.

Carol Rizzolo:

Protecting election workers is important, especially in a time of intimidation and doxing.

Larry Rizzolo:

Many election workers have reportedly resigned or are unwilling to volunteer as workers across the country have been harassed and threatened. To ensure fair and open elections we must protect those who make democracy possible.

Judy Stone:

It is essential that all poll workers should be protected.

Vicki Volper:

In many locations, poll workers risk verbal abuse and fear physical harm. It is increasingly difficult to recruit poll workers, the least that can be done is preventing the presence of firearms and protecting the residential addresses of these individuals.

Gayle Walter:

Citizens need to be assured that their safety at the polls is a priority in order for enough individuals to be willing to sign on to work at the polls.

Jonah Zern, Public Citizen:

Free and fair elections are a necessary foundation to a healthy democracy, but across the US, the people responsible for facilitating elections are increasingly under threat. 15 states have currently passed legislation to protect election officials since 2022 and 26, including CT, have introduced legislation. Public Citizen strongly urges the passage of this bill.

Also expressed support:

Roy Young

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Thea Alfes, CCDL:

States that laws restricting the ability of law-abiding citizens to carry their firearms have failed to provide or demonstrate safety and security. Believes the legislation strays far from the United States Constitution, and more study should be done to investigate whether gun free zones are safer or not.

Mark Anderson:

The bill is well-intentioned in its aim to enhance security but could inadvertently have far-reaching consequences that infringe upon the rights of law-abiding citizens and potentially compromise public safety. The 1,000-foot radius could unintentionally criminalize citizens

who are otherwise law-abiding for exercising their right to carry a firearm. Disarming citizens may impact the right to self-defense, and the "sensitive location" ban is likely at odds with the Supreme Court's Bruen Decision.

Ralph Baldassari:

Opposed to the proposal to ban concealed carry weapons around voting areas, believing such a ban infringes upon second amendment rights. Individuals should not have to choose between exercising their right to vote and the right to self-defense. Urges consideration of alternative solutions to prioritize public safety while respecting the rights of responsible gun owners.

Stephen Bennett:

Urges opposition, stating that the prohibition of possession of a firearm within 1,000 feet of a polling location is an egregious violation of law-abiding citizens' rights as the bill does not explicitly exempt persons legally licensed to carry nor does it explicitly exempt persons on their own property if their properties or businesses are located within that 1,000 ft exclusion zone. Additionally, one could unknowingly violate the proposition by simply driving or walking within 1,000 ft of a polling location that is unknown to the individual.

Troy Bierkorte:

States that the provision is a solution in search of a problem, as the lawful carrying of a firearm by a person permitted by the state to do so has not resulted in a case of violent interference in any fair election that can be cited as rationale. Those who carry firearms for nefarious purposes and are not permitted to carry will disregard this provision.

Brian Bradshaw:

Urges the bill to be revised to support election workers and officials from doxing while not further infringing on second amendment rights. These types of "sensitive location" bans have been recently overturned in California.

Keith Cagle, Friends of CT Sportsmen President:

Offers opposition on behalf of Friends of CT Sportsmen. States the bill is a clear and obvious attempt to disenfranchise law-abiding gun owners by criminalizing their normal, legal behavior. Law-abiding gun owners should not face criminal penalties for crossing arbitrary lines with no intent to disrupt or interfere with the voting process. If there is no definitive list of these locations, it is difficult to know where people can and cannot go. A gun-free zone advertises the vulnerability of those within that zone because those are the specific areas criminals with ill-intent will target.

Douglas Gillette:

States opposition, as gun-free zones create "victim zones" where law-abiding citizens may not protect themselves or others from violence. The 1,000-foot exclusion creates a patchwork of exclusionary zones that will not be demarcated and difficult to navigate, and there is no exclusion for persons who reside within that zone.

Michael Grzes:

Opposed to the bill, stating that it may potentially increase the risk of firearm-related incidents, as even the most secure, locked compartments in vehicles are not impervious to determined criminals. This means that firearms stolen from vehicles can find their way into

the wrong hands, creating a scenario where there is greater risk than having a firearm securely carried by a law-abiding, trained, and vetted individual.

Michele Jacklin, CT Council on FOI:

Offers opposition to section 1 of the legislation, stating that it erodes FOIA and creates a false sense of security. Posits that with regards to the residential addresses of public employees, FOIA ensures accountability because an address is an important piece of information in accomplishing that goal. A residential address is a key piece of information that helps the public know if the arrested party is, in fact, the employee in question or someone else with the same name.

Lee Kelly:

It is regular practice in some towns for town officials to change voting locations based on expected turnout. One may be unaware of a referendum and violate the 1,000-foot area without intention, desire, or knowledge of the law. Suggests an alternative 75-foot radius exclusion.

David Mancini:

According to stats published by Mirror.org, CT has had zero issues with violence, breach of peace, or demonstrations at any polling places. Approx. 7.9% of the state population are legal permit holders and this bill will have a direct punitive effect on those who adhere to both local and state laws.

Anne Manusky, Connecticut Republican Assembly President:

The bill is an attempt on the usurpation of the rights stated in the Preamble of the CT Constitution, rights to be secure in our persons.

Thomas Meier:

Concerned the proposal could have negative effects as the verbiage of the presented bill is not clear as to intent of the individual in possession of a firearm. The proposal also restricts Second Amendment rights are clearly defined under the Supreme Court Case of Bruen.

Thomas Pinkowish:

Believes the legislation to be poorly proposed as the possibility of unintended punishment to a legal gun carrier who might be driving past a location and may not realize they are within the limit. The state would have a responsibility to post clear and conspicuous notices that a traveler is approaching, entering, and leaving these areas. The intent of protection is laudable, but this legislation will create a financial burden on the state and municipalities, as well as a liability.

Holly Sullivan, CT Citizens Defense League President:

Offers opposition to section 2, particularly urging the revision of the language referring to an exemption for individuals to carry who are "licensed or privileged to do so" to explicitly recognize permits issued by the state. Alternatively, urges the removal of section 2 altogether.

Also expressed opposition:

Christopher Abbott

Stan Adrian

Felix Agosto Jr.
Joseph Aiello
Luigi D'Alessandris
John Alberti
J. Alonzo
Kristyn D'Amato
Nicholas D'Amato
Donald Antilla
Robert Applegate
Donna Arena
Andrew Arsenault
Seth Arzt
Kurt Asplund
John Atkins
Sue Awezec
John B.
George Backhaus
Beth Bacon
John Baker
Mike Balaban
Dawn Baldassari
Tara Baldassari
Lori Bartoes
Dom Basile
Christopher Baten
Charles Baugh
Brandon Beaudoin
Karen Bellino
Joshua Benoit
David Bicknell
Christopher Bitel
Bill Black
Alton Blodgett
Shirley Bloethe
Todd Bogli
Ann Bogucki
Steve Bonin
Greg Borosage
Wayne Botha
Jeffrey Bowman
Ryan Boyle
Spencer Bracco
Kevin Bradley
Chester Brand
Chris Brangi
Jeffrey Brangi
Matthew Bravim
David Brill
Anthony Brodeur

Christopher Brule
Ralph Brunson
Brett Buchas
Francis Burgess
Victor Burnett
Leo Busch
Kenneth Busick
Daniel Butler
Robert Butler
K.C.
Michael Caggiano
Giulio Cancellieri
Robert Capodiferro
Denise Caputo
Jeremy Carlson
Ken Carnes
Andrew Caron
Douglas Carrier
David Carson
Gregory Cartier
Michael Case
David Cassidy
Craig Cerone
Jason Cesana
Peter Ceulemans
David Chapdelaine
Thomas Chicoski
Eric Chilcott
Damian Chuchro
Dominic Cianciolo
Joan Cianciolo
Jessica Clancy
Sean Clancy
Leon Clark
Richard Clavet
Heidi Clifford
Alon Cohen
Robert Colby
Chad Collesian
Denny Colon
Keith Combs
Terrence Connors
Lucy Corelli
Gary Corigliano
Anthony Corrado
Christopher Cosgrove
Brandon Cruz
Jermaine Cruz
Jeffrey Cullins

Christopher Cumbo
George Curry
Rick Cyr
Ruth Cyr
Linda Czaplinski
Dawid Czarnecki
Michael D'Angelo
Brian Daconto
Linda Dalessio
Richard Daniott
Thomas Darna
Eric Daske
Richard Daugherty
Chad Davis
Robert Davis
David DeGregorio
Jerrod Delagrave
Steve Delcegno
Xavier Delvalle
Ben DeMario
Timothy Deschenes
Richard DeWick
Harding Dies
Daniel Dineen
Angelo DiPietro
Jacob Donaldson
Roy Downey
Kay Drysdale
Jess Duchene
Catherine Dumas
Eric Edwards
Harold Eldred
Jerry Ellis
Mazen Elmaghrabi
Michael Enders
Thomas Entwistle
Debbie Esposito
Frank Failla
Michael Farina
James Farley
Michael Faucher
George Fischer
Timothy Fisher
Jeff Fluckiger
Guy Fodor
William Fraher
Thomas Franek
Kurt Frank
Gregory Frost

Gerald Fucci Jr.
Glenn Fuoco
Thomas Galvin
Michelle Garabedian
Robert Georgini
Allen Gerard
Tom Giambra
Richard Gingras
Kyle Gless
Arthur Goldstein
David Gonzalez Garcia
Ronald Goodmaster
Jack Gorfien
Martin Grabeck
Stephen Granoth
Eddie Grant
Shawn Gravelin
Carolyn Graziano
Jay Greene
Robert Grosso
Erik Grudzien
Michael Guglielmo
Jason Guidone
Paul Guimaraes
Alexander Gust
Peter Haddad
Walter Hagedorn
B. Hajek
Sean Hannan
Mordechai Hanover
David Hart
Brendan Hatlee
Jason Hawes
Mark Hayden
Paul Heely
Russell Hehn
Tomika Henderson
Kimo Hensley
Christina Herrity
David Herz
Bill Hillman
William Hodge
Daniel Hubbard
William Hurley
David Ioime
Marie Matta-Isona
Joe Joe
Lisa Jolley
John Kalotai

Tim Kaufman
George Kenyon
John Kershaw
Daniel Kiley
Stephen Kim
Cliff Klein
Douglas Kneissl
Andrew Koehm
John Kornegay
Alfred Kritzman
Walt Kupson
Michele LaCrosse
Tim LaDucer
Ryan Lancaster
David Landau
Robert Lange
Richard Langley
David LaPorte
Howard Larson Jr.
Joe Lattarulo
Thomas Lattarulo
Larry Lauer
Robert Lavezzoli
Tomasz Lazuk
Robert Leach
Raymond Lecours
Deborah Legg
Nathaniel Leonardo
Matthew Lettrich
Jason Levy
Bruce Lindsley
Joan Liska
John Liversidge
Mark Lloret
Frank Lombardi
David Longo
Daniel Lopez
Paul Lozis
Vxeay Luangpraseuth
Michael Lupinacci
Dave M.
Chris Macary
Nicholas Mace
Erin Magoon
Stephen Magyera
Kenneth Main
Tom Maloney
Bob Margolis
Michael Margolis

Richard Marra
Richard Martin
Claire Matthews
Richard Mayhew
Elyse Maynard
Tyler Maynard
Kevin McCabe
Don McCann
Susan McCann
Kenneth McClellan
Jared McCool
Michael McFarren
Samuel McGill
David McGivney
Scott McGregor
Jeffrey McGurk
Thomas McGurl
William McIntosh
Terri McLaughlin
Reis Medeiros
Wayne Medeiros
Anthony Mele
Keith Melvin
Daniel Menona
Ted Miller
Edward Milne
Alfred Moenter
James Moore
Michael Moore
O. E. Moore
Bob Moreno
William Morgan
George Morton
Janine Mulder
Arlene Murphy
James Murray
Na Na
Stav Nat
Timothy O'Neill
David Nevin
Alistair Nicol
Robert Nilsson
Mike Nintean
Stephen Nizzardo
Thomas Nomes
Robert Nyilas
Scott Oberg
Shellene Olson
Mike Ose

Eric Ossman
Jerry Ostapowicz
Michael Palmer
Lewis Palmieri
Charles Paonessa
Joseph Papa
William Papp
Rita Patterson
David Peizzari
John Pepper
Jeffrey Perkins
Wayne Petroskey
Robert Phelan
Richard Pierce
Christopher Piercey
Karen Pizzitola
Philip Polihrom
William Polowy
Bill Pond
Daniel Poole
James Poulos
John Powers
Gregory Prusinowski
Andrew Pulvermacher
Benjamin Purdy
Rebecca Quinn
William Quinn
Leon Rad
Omar Rawlins
Michael Regan
Tyler Renshaw
Gerald Richard
James Ritchie
Ericka Rivera
John Roccapriore
Jordan Rodriguez
Craig Rogoff
Joseph Roman
Alex Romero
Jorge Romero
Bill Roode
Scott Rotherforth
Jonathan Rubens
Charles Rund
Frank Russello
Stephen Russo
Edith Sabia
John Sabia
Troy Sanchas

Andrzej Sandomierz
Mike Santangelo
Jack Santo
John Sanzo
Matthew Saunders
Joseph Scanlan
David Schaefer
Nicholas Scheer
Ed Schierloh
Eric Schutz
Frank Scirpo
Peter Seaman
Tom Segla
Brian Seipold
Anthony Servidone
Raymond Sharkey
Danny Shea
James Shea
Richard Shea
Shannon Skubel
Patrick Smedick
Liz Smith
Samuel Smith
Seth Smith
John Snape
Richard Souza
Les Spector
Anthony Sperduti
Dominick Spina
Jaimie-Lynn St. Onge
Christopher Staab
Andrew Starczewski
Robert Starr
Chris Stavrianos
Warren Stevens
Carleton Stoup
Fred Strasser
Matthew Strasser
Christopher Stratton
Chris Swiatlon
Roger Szendy
Craig Szwed
Jeffrey Tang
Ray Tao
Mohib Tawheed
Curtis Temple
Jo Tenorio
Daniel Terninko
Jeff Theis

Greg Thomas
Arthur Tiede
Thomas Tierney
Angelo Timpano
Joseph Tine
Isaac Tluchak
Pavel Tolkachev
Andrew Tomko
Christian Torrillo
Mark Traceski
Daniel Trombley
Mark Trotochaud
Doru Truia
Gaines Tyler
Nicole Vacila
Jennifer Van Gorder
Joseph Van Gorder
Kevin Van Keuren
Dain Vanderminden
Stephen Varhol
Carl Vassar
J. Vecchio
Christopher Vereneau
Carli Villa
Geoff Viscount
Chris Vitorino
Richard Vollmer
Linda Wood
James Ward
Jamie Ward
Terry Ward
David Warncke
Randy Watts
Carl Weber
Kurt Weisheit
R. Weiss
Gerald Williams
Raymond Williams
Steven Williams
Peter Williamson
Scott Wilson
Tyson Winchell
Howard Winston
John Wolf
Grzegorz Wrobel
Melanie Young
Daniel Yudichak
Mark Zacchio
William Ziedman

Kregg Zulkeski

67 Anonymous individuals also expressed opposition.

Reported by: Lindsay de Brito

Date: 4/4/24