

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-262

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL CAMPAIGN FINANCE FILINGS.

Vote Date: 3/15/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/4/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration & Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To have municipal campaign finance filings stored with the State Elections Enforcement Commission so that filings are subject to better public disclosure and transparency.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Michael Brandi, Executive Director, SEEC: Supports this bill because it would aid the Commission in processing municipal campaign filings without requiring additional employees. States that the bill would make the eCRIS system more widely accessible by giving the Commission the ability to conduct more training and outreach. Also states that the bill would improve the communication between candidates and the Commission and would make elections more transparent by increasing the visibility of outside spending.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Pamela Klem, Campaign Finance Specialist, CT League of Women Voters: Supports this bill because it will improve the efficiency of government operations. States that the bill would extend the benefits of the existing system to municipalities and improve campaign finance transparency, allowing elections officials to gain the trust of the public. Also states that the change would come with little additional cost to the state for such a significant improvement and how filings are conducted.

Carol Rizzolo: Supports this bill because they believe Connecticut needs a single repository of campaign information to improve transparency and access. Also agrees with Michael

Brandi that the current system requires that filings are generally unavailable to the public as they are hidden in municipal offices.

Tom Swan, Executive Director, CCAG: Supports this bill because it will expand the use of the eCRIS system by giving the SEEC oversight over all campaign finance records.

Erica Byrne: Supports this bill because it would improve transparency in the campaign finance system and help campaign treasurers and town clerks navigate the complicated process. Also states that this extra transparency is needed due to the high amounts spent in elections.

Susan Pawluk, Town Clerk, Stratford: Supports this bill because it will be a significant improvement in the filing of municipal campaign finance statements. States that this would help ease the burden on town clerks during election season as the other responsibilities of town clerks do not let up. Also states that the bill removes the awkwardness of a town clerk needing to penalize the treasurer of a candidate who may be their next boss.

Lyda Ruijter, Town Clerk, City of Stamford: Supports this bill because it improves the transparency of campaign filings as candidates for major offices can file for large amounts of money that town clerks are not prepared to staff for. States that the bill helps absolve elected town clerks of the need to penalize their opponent if their opponent were not filing properly. Also states that it can be nearly impossible for town clerks to determine the accuracy of candidate files due to the sheer number of candidates filing with the clerk.

Antoinette Spinelli, Co-Legislative Chair, CT Town Clerks Association: Supports this bill because it will streamline the public's access to campaign finance forms, thus improving transparency. States that consolidating SEEC regulations will reduce confusion in municipal elections and improve efficiency and transparency for treasurers using the eCRIS system. Also recommends that the effective date be changed to January 1, 2025.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No sources of opposition were provided.

Reported by: Gabriel Marques, Assistant Clerk Date: 3/19/2024