

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-386

AN ACT CONCERNING DESIGNATION OF POLLING PLACES AND

**Title:** IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING AT PRIMARIES AND ELECTIONS.

**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:

The legislation, as amended, aims to implement a requirement concerning the relocation of polling places in which a public hearing and vote of the legislative body are held prior to relocation. It also requires the Secretary of State to report on the implementation of early voting at the 2024 presidential preference primary and offer recommendations for improvement.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Al Paolillo, Deputy Speaker, and Martin Looney, Senate President Pro Tempore:

In support specifically of a request reflected in the legislation that whenever there is a proposed change in location of a polling place no later than 120 days before an election or primary, the town's legislative body hold a public hearing and vote in addition to proper notice needed when a polling location would have changed. Public discussion and disclosure on reasons for needing to switch the location are necessary.

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of State:

Supports section 6 of the bill requiring the Office of the Secretary of State to submit a report on the statewide implementation of early voting after the April 2<sup>nd</sup> presidential preference primary but suggests the language be modified to a later date. Also suggests Section 1 should include language that clarifies a municipality approves a new location. Expresses additional concern that granting authority for the review process to local legislative bodies creates conflict with existing laws and regulations.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

Jason Bowsza, First Selectman of East Windsor:

Asks the committee to clarify that for municipalities using the town meeting form of government, the "legislative body of such municipality" be the Board of Selectmen. Implementation of early voting has been challenging for local governments, organizationally and budgetarily. A more cost effective and easy to implement solution would be to forego early voting and allow for no excuse absentee voting.

Pamela Klem, CT League of Women Voters:

Supports core elements of the bill, particularly allowance of towns and cities to adjust placement of early voting sites when change is necessary or improves voter access and use of each municipality's legislative body to make decisions on moving early voting places. Recognizes deficiency in the bill, where no provision is made for notifying voters that their polling location has moved, as newspaper is not a reliable means.

Anna Shugrue, Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments:

Supports language provided in testimony submitted by RiverCOG, and the request to remove the March 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for the execution of an MOU between the Secretary of State and COGs.

Jess Zaccagnino, American Civil Liberties Union of CT:

The bill would permit municipalities to change the location of early voting sites where the change is necessary or improves access to voting, but needs amendment, particularly in section 4 to provide more effective means to communicate than the required newspaper notification.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

Jermaine Cruz:

Urges not to pass the bill

Corey Finke:

Bill removes the rights of citizens, will negatively impact private property and self defense

Glenn Fuoco:

The people have rights in a free country

Walter Hagedorn:

The bill does nothing to protect anyone but rather stops people from protecting themselves, also does not stand up to the Supreme Court Bruin decision.

Donovan Haughton:

Majority of gun owners are sportsmen and law-abiding citizens

Dana Lambert:

Believes stopping citizens from protecting themselves in polling areas is unconstitutional.

Sue Larsen, ROVAC:

Bill lacks clarity regarding permanence of polling locations. It is also appropriate for discussion to be held on why chosen polling locations meet community needs. The requirement for Secretary State to conduct a statewide review after the Presidential Preference Primary is unnecessary.

David McGivney:

Retired police officer, questions where someone licensed to carry can store a firearm if they are within 1,000 feet of a polling place.

Ladslaus Sacharko:

Objects to the proposed ban, as any ban ensures the only armed person at a given location is one who intends to break the law.

John Seymour, Twenty Aviation:

Believes the law will have no effect.

Andrew Starczewski:

Especially in opposition to sections following line 119, banning firearms within the radius of almost a quarter mile of any polling place on any days the most minor of balloting events occur for the reason that it denies civil rights.

James Ward:

Violates 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights.

Scott Wilkerson:

Criminals do not obey gun laws.

Anonymous:

Overreach of second amendment right to protect oneself in public.

Anonymous:

Persons who will cause problems at a polling place don't care about laws.

#### **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

Samuel Gold, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments, General Comments:

Requests that the bill remove the March 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for the execution of a memorandum of understanding between the Secretary of State and the Councils of Governments, as funding needed will not be accessible until the following year.

**Reported by: Lindsay de Brito**

**Date: 4/3/24**