Senate

General Assembly

File No. 667

January Session, 2025

Substitute Senate Bill No. 1156

Senate, April 14, 2025

The Committee on Government Administration and Elections reported through SEN. FLEXER of the 29th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE RECOGNITION OF MINOR PARTIES FOR PURPOSES OF NOMINATING PETITIONS.

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

Section 1. Section 9-453b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2026*):

The Secretary of the State shall not issue any nominating petition forms for a candidate for an office to be filled at a regular election to be held in any year prior to the first business day of such year. The Secretary shall not issue any nominating petition forms unless the person requesting the nominating petition forms makes a written application for such forms, which application shall contain the following: (1) The name or names of the candidates to appear on such nominating petition, compared by the town clerk of the town of residence of each candidate with the candidate's name as it appears on the last-completed registry list of such town, and verified and corrected by such town clerk or in the case of a newly admitted elector whose

name does not appear on the last-completed registry list, the town clerk shall compare the candidate's name as it appears on the candidate's application for admission and verify and correct it accordingly; (2) a signed statement by each such candidate that the candidate consents to the placing of the candidate's name on such petition; and (3) the party designation, if any. An applicant for petition forms who does not wish to specify a party designation shall so indicate on the application for such forms and the application, if so marked, shall not be amended in this respect. No application made after November 3, 1981, shall contain any party designation unless a reservation of such party designation with the Secretary is in effect for all of the offices included in the application or unless the party designation is the same as the name of a minor party **[**which**]** that is qualified for a different office or offices on the same ballot as the office or offices included in the application or that is described in subparagraph (B) of subdivision (6) of section 9-372, as amended by this act. The Secretary shall not issue such forms (A) unless the application for forms on behalf of a candidate for the office of presidential elector is accompanied by the names of the candidates for President and Vice-President whom the candidate for the office of presidential elector represents and includes the consent of such candidates for President and Vice-President; (B) unless the application for forms on behalf of Governor or Lieutenant Governor is accompanied by the name of the candidate for the other office and includes the consent of both such candidates; (C) if petition forms have previously been issued on behalf of the same candidate for the same office unless the candidate files a written statement of withdrawal of the candidate's previous candidacy with the Secretary; and (D) unless the application meets the requirements of this section. A candidacy for nomination by nominating petition to a district or municipal office may be filed on behalf of any person whose name appears on the last-completed registry list of the district or municipality represented by such office, as the case may be. A candidacy for nomination by nominating petition to a state office may be filed on behalf of any person whose name appears on the last-completed registry list of the state.

Sec. 2. Section 9-372 of the general statutes is repealed and the

following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2026*):

The following terms, as used in this chapter, chapter 157 and sections 9-51 to 9-67, inclusive, 9-169e, 9-217, 9-236 and 9-361, shall have the following meanings:

(1) "Caucus" means any meeting, at a designated hour and place, or at designated hours and places, of the enrolled members of a political party within a municipality or political subdivision thereof for the purpose of selecting party-endorsed candidates for a primary to be held by such party or for the purpose of transacting other business of such party;

(2) "Convention" means a meeting of delegates of a political party held for the purpose of designating the candidate or candidates to be endorsed by such party in a primary of such party for state or district office or for the purpose of transacting other business of such party;

(3) "District" means any geographic portion of the state which crosses the boundary or boundaries between two or more towns;

(4) "District office" means an elective office for which only the electors in a district, as defined in subdivision (3) of this section, may vote;

(5) "Major party" means (A) a political party or organization whose candidate for Governor at the last-preceding election for Governor received, under the designation of that political party or organization, at least twenty per cent of the whole number of votes cast for all candidates for Governor, or (B) a political party having, at the last-preceding election for Governor, a number of enrolled members on the active registry list equal to at least twenty per cent of the total number of enrolled members of all political parties on the active registry list in the state;

(6) "Minor party" means (A) a political party or organization **[**which**]** that is not a major party and whose candidate for the office in question received at the last-preceding regular election for such office, under the designation of that political party or organization, at least one per cent

of the whole number of votes cast for all candidates for such office at such election, or (B) with respect to a candidate applying to appear on a nominating petition for any office in accordance with the provisions of section 9-453b, as amended by this act, a political party or organization that is not a major party and whose candidate for a state office received at the last-preceding regular election for such state office, under the designation of that political party or organization, at least one per cent of the whole number of votes cast for all candidates for such state office at such election;

(7) "Municipal office" means an elective office for which only the electors of a single town, city, borough, or political subdivision, as defined in subdivision (10) of this section, may vote, including the office of justice of the peace;

(8) "Party designation committee" means an organization, composed of at least twenty-five members who are electors, **[**which**]** that has, on or after November 4, 1981, reserved a party designation with the Secretary of the State pursuant to the provisions of this chapter;

(9) "Party-endorsed candidate" means (A) in the case of a candidate for state or district office, a person endorsed by the convention of a political party as a candidate in a primary to be held by such party, and (B) in the case of a candidate for municipal office or for member of a town committee, a person endorsed by the town committee, caucus or convention, as the case may be, of a political party as a candidate in a primary to be held by such party;

(10) "Political subdivision" means any voting district or combination of voting districts constituting a part of a municipality;

(11) "Primary" means a meeting of the enrolled members of a political party and, when applicable under section 9-431, unaffiliated electors, held during consecutive hours at which such members or electors may, without assembling at the same hour, vote by secret ballot for candidates for nomination to office or for town committee members;

(12) "Registrar" means the registrar of voters in a municipality who is enrolled with the political party holding a primary and, in each municipality where there are different registrars for different voting districts, means the registrar so enrolled in the voting district in which, at the last-preceding regular election, the presiding officer for the purpose of declaring the result of the vote of the whole municipality was moderator;

(13) "Slate" means a group of candidates for nomination by a political party to the office of justice of the peace of a town, which group numbers at least a bare majority of the number of justices of the peace to be nominated by such party for such town;

(14) "State office" means any office for which all the electors of the state may vote and includes the office of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary, Treasurer, Comptroller, Attorney General and senator in Congress, but does not include the office of elector of President and Vice-President of the United States;

(15) "Votes cast for the same office at the last-preceding election" or "votes cast for all candidates for such office at the last-preceding election" means, in the case of multiple openings for the same office, the total number of electors checked as having voted at the last-preceding election at which such office appeared on the ballot.

Sec. 3. Section 9-66 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2026*):

The provisions of sections 9-51 to 9-67, inclusive, shall extend only to (A) any major party, as defined in subdivision (5) of section 9-372, and (B) any minor party, as defined in subdivision (6) of section 9-372, as amended by this act. In the case of a major party, such provisions shall apply state-wide. In the case of a minor party, such provisions shall apply within the geographical jurisdiction of the office or offices to which such minor party status pertains, as provided in subdivision (6) of section 9-372, as amended by this act.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	*January 1, 2026*	9-453b
Sec. 2	*January 1, 2026*	9-372
Sec. 3	*January 1, 2026*	9-66

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:
Section 2(6) was redrafted for clarity.

GAE *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*

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: None

Explanation

This bill expands ballot access for minor parties if a candidate nominated by that party for state office received at least 1% of the vote for a statewide office in the last election, and results in no fiscal impact to the state or municipalities.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis

SB 1156

AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE RECOGNITION OF MINOR PARTIES FOR PURPOSES OF NOMINATING PETITIONS.

SUMMARY

This bill allows minor party candidates to qualify for ballot access in state, district, and municipal elections if a candidate under that party's designation for any state office received at least 1% of the votes cast for that office in the last election, rather than on a case-by-case basis as under current law. Under state law, "state office" includes the office of governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of the state, treasurer, comptroller, attorney general, and U.S. senator, but does not include presidential electors.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2026

MINOR PARTY BALLOT ACCESS

Under Connecticut's election system, candidates running for office can get their names on the ballot in one of three ways: (1) nomination by a major party, (2) nomination by a minor party, and (3) nomination by a nominating petition. The law differentiates how a candidate may gain ballot access depending on whether the party is major or minor.

Under current law, a "minor party" is one that is not a major party and whose candidate for the office in question received, under the same party designation, at least 1% of the votes cast for the same office at the last regular election. In other words, unlike major parties, minor parties qualify for ballot access on a case-by-case basis and cannot nominate candidates to offices for which they have not achieved minor party status.

By law, if the party does not have minor party status for a particular office, a person may run under the party's designation only by submitting a signed petition to the secretary of the state. Under current law, it must be signed by (1) 1% of the qualified electors for the same office in the last-preceding election or (2) 7,500 qualified electors (1% is usually the lower threshold and therefore the one most petitioners must meet). For example, if a person is running for state senator, the petition must be signed by a total number of voters that equals 1% of all the voters that cast a ballot for that state senate race in the last election.

This bill instead allows petitioning minor party candidates to qualify for ballot access for state, district, or municipal offices if a candidate under that party's designation received 1% of the votes cast for a state office in the last election. Under existing law, unchanged by the bill, once a minor party has qualified to nominate a candidate for an office, the party does not have to submit a petition at the next election for that office. Failure to consecutively run candidates for that office results in losing minor party status for that office.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 13 Nay 6 (03/26/2025)