OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5001 (as amended by House "A" and "E")*

AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING FOR ALL AND VARIOUS OTHER REFORMS TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTIONS.

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BACKGROUND

SUMMARY

This bill makes various changes to the state's election laws, as well as technical and conforming changes, as described in the section-by-section analysis below.

*House Amendment "A" makes various changes to the bill including (1) requiring absentee balloting sets to include a privacy sleeve, (2) removing the disclaimer requirements for unsolicited absentee ballots delivered by certain entities, (3) changing the deadline by which (a) town clerks must deliver certain absentee ballots to registrars on election day and (b) absentee ballot counters must report to their counting locations, (4) eliminating the provision authorizing delivery of absentee ballots electronically to voters with permanent absentee ballot status, and (5) expanding the secretary of the state's (SOTS) authority to relieve deputy registrars.

The amendment also adds several new provisions that (1) prohibit certain acts near election sites; (2) expand additional harassment protections to assistant municipal clerks and modifying the related penalty; (3) criminalize certain acts involving tabulators, tabulator parts, and absentee ballot drop boxes; (4) expand the attorney general's (AG) authority regarding certain civil rights violations; (5) make technical changes concerning tabulators at same-day registration (SDR) locations;

(6) extend certification requirements to deputy registrars; (7) require SOTS to make best efforts to notify certain people about errors and omissions in certain election certificates filed with her office; (8) establish procedures for when registrars plan to use electronic poll books to check in voters; (9) establish task forces to study (a) absentee voting in unconsolidated cities and boroughs and (b) reaching 100% voter participation; and (10) authorize municipalities to establish a pilot program for achieving 100% voter participation.

*House Amendment "E" (1) eliminates provisions expanding permanent absentee voting, (2) authorizes electronic transmission of absentee ballots to voters with permanent absentee ballot status who request it, (3) creates procedures for voters to automatically receive absentee ballot applications, and (4) specifies that certain prohibited acts near elections sites concerning certain officers and agents do not apply if these officers and agents are residing within 250 feet of one.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various; see below.

§§ 1, 2 & 26-28 — NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Expands absentee voting to all eligible voters, instead of requiring voters to have a specified excuse to vote

Under current law, in order to apply for and cast an absentee ballot, a voter must be unable to appear at his or her designated polling place on election day due to (1) active service in the U.S. armed forces; (2) absence from their city or town; (3) sickness or physical disability; (4) their religious beliefs prohibiting secular activity on that day; or (5) service as an election, primary, or referendum official at a polling place other than his or her own during all voting hours. The bill eliminates these requirements and instead allows any eligible voter who completes and submits an absentee ballot application to attain permanent absentee ballot status.

Correspondingly, the bill eliminates the prohibition on misrepresenting absentee ballot eligibility requirements to any elector or prospective applicant.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except that certain related

technical and conforming changes are effective July 1, 2026.

§§ 2-7, 11-13, 18-21, 23-25 & 73 — ABSENTEE BALLOT MATERIALS

Makes various changes to absentee balloting sets and related materials including (1) consolidating the inner and outer envelopes into one "return envelope," (2) expanding the information included on the envelope, (3) requiring a privacy sleeve, and (4) switching from serial numbers to unique ballot ID numbers

The bill makes various changes to the absentee balloting sets and related materials, including (1) consolidating the inner and outer envelopes into one "return envelope," (2) expanding the information included on the envelope, (3) requiring a privacy sleeve for the ballot, and (4) switching from serial numbers to unique ballot identification (ID) numbers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

Absentee Ballot Applications

The bill requires an absentee ballot application to display a unique ballot ID number instead of being consecutively numbered.

Return Envelopes

Under current law, absentee ballot sets consist of a ballot, an outer envelope with information about the elector (such as their name and address), and an inner envelope with a statement signed by the elector under penalty of false statement in absentee balloting. Once the elector has filled out the ballot, he or she must insert the ballot into the inner envelope, seal it inside, and then insert the inner envelope into the outer one.

The bill instead consolidates the information on the inner and outer envelopes into one absentee balloting envelope (a return envelope). It also modifies the information that must be on the return envelope by removing language regarding excuses to vote absentee from the statement the voter signs, and by requiring:

1. the voter to also print their name on the face of the envelope, which, under existing law and the bill, must be signed and capable of being sealed;

2. the envelope to be endorsed with the words "OFFICIAL ABSENTEE BALLOT";

3. a label with specified information generated by the Centralized Voter Registration System (CVRS; see below);

4. a return label displaying a unique ballot ID number (see below);

5. a notice about certain state absentee ballot handling laws (see below); and

6. the clerk's official address to be inscribed before the absentee ballot set is issued.

Additionally, the bill requires town clerks to provide an additional envelope that is pre-addressed to the clerk if federal law requires the voter to mail back their identification (see BACKGROUND). Currently, any required identification must be placed in the outer envelope.

Required Labels. The CVRS label must include (1) the sender's name and return address; (2) the applicant's name, address, and voting district; (3) the ballot style; (4) a unique ballot ID number; (5) the date of the election contest; and (6) if for a primary, the name of the political party holding that primary.

The bill requires the ballot ID number on the return labels to be in a text format and as a scannable barcode (instead of requiring all outer envelopes to be serially and consecutively numbered as under current law).

Absentee Ballot Restrictions Notice. The return envelope's notice must warn anyone handling the absentee ballot about state law's (1) restrictions on who may possess and return absentee ballots and (2) restrictions and penalties regarding completing or executing absentee ballots.

Privacy Sleeve

The bill additionally requires absentee ballot voting sets to contain a privacy sleeve for the ballot and requires SOTS to create and provide

them. Relatedly, the bill specifies the return envelope must accommodate returning an absentee ballot in the sleeve and that the existing plain language instructions on using an absentee ballot must also cover using the privacy sleeve. As under existing law for other absentee ballot materials, a sufficient supply of the privacy sleeves must be printed to supply the amount (1) a town clerk requests or (2) SOTS deems sufficient.

Ballot Identification Numbers

For the change from serial numbers to unique ID numbers, the bill correspondingly requires clerks to ensure the unique ballot ID number that appears on the return envelope matches the one on the application form. As under current law, clerks must keep a list of unique ballot ID numbers and the name of the applicant receiving the corresponding absentee ballot set. They must also do so for any additional absentee voting sets they issue (for example, replacements) and ballots of presidential voters and overseas electors.

Relatedly, the bill eliminates the requirement for the clerk to issue absentee ballot sets in consecutive ascending numerical order based on the envelope's serial numbers.

Other Materials

State law generally prohibits including anything else with an absentee voting set except (1) for alternate applications for certain military personnel and overseas voters and (2) when necessary to correct errors and omissions as allowed by state law. The bill additionally allows any voting information SOTS requires to be included, but explicitly prohibits including voting information promoting a question's success or defeat.

§ 4 — ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION DISTRIBUTION

Modifies requirements for mailing unsolicited absentee ballot applications by certain entities and their agents; modifies prohibition on distributing applications without the applicable year noted on them

State law generally requires individuals requesting or distributing absentee ballot applications for other people to (1) register with the town clerk if distributing five or more applications, excluding those for family

members, for a specific election contest and (2) keep a log of who received their applications, including specified details, and file it with the town clerk.

The bill eliminates a prohibition against distributing absentee ballot applications unless the application specifies the year in which the application may be used. However, the bill maintains the provision in current law that prohibits clerks from accepting, and people from using, ballot applications without the correct year noted.

Similarly, current law allows a candidate, party, or political committee (or candidates' or committees' agents) to mail unsolicited applications to voters if they include a written (1) explanation of the eligibility requirements for voting absentee (including the reasons needed) and (2) warning about the penalties for violating these requirements. The bill instead requires these unsolicited applications to include a written (1) disclaimer noting that the individual or committee paid for the mailing and, if the mailing was paid for by a candidate committee, that the applicable candidate approved it, and (2) explanation of the options for returning absentee ballots under state law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 4 — ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS FOR INCARCERATED VOTERS

Allows DOC employees assisting incarcerated voters with their absentee ballots to provide the employing facility's contact information instead of their personal contact information

By law, anyone assisting a voter in completing their absentee ballot must sign the application and print their name, residential address, and telephone number on it. Additionally, the law outlines procedures for Department of Correction (DOC) employees to distribute, collect, and return absentee ballots for incarcerated voters who have retained their voting rights.

The bill specifies that DOC employees who assist these voters with their absentee ballot applications must instead provide the address and telephone number of the facility where they are employed and provided

the assistance, instead of their residential address and personal telephone number.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 4 & 14-17 — ISSUING ABSENTEE BALLOTS ELECTRONICALLY

Specifies that town clerks, when required by federal law, must send absentee ballots electronically or by mail as requested by a voter, including for presidential ballots; allows voters with permanent absentee ballot status to receive absentee ballots electronically

Under federal law, states generally must send absentee ballots electronically to overseas voters and members of the armed forces and their spouses and dependents who live with them. States do not have to receive them electronically.

Relatedly, the bill explicitly requires town clerks to issue absentee ballots electronically to these voters, as well as former residents and overseas electors requesting "presidential ballots" to vote for the president and vice president only. (Separately, the bill requires voters casting presidential ballots to print their name on the return envelope in addition to signing it.)

Similarly, the bill authorizes voters with permanent absentee ballot status to request and receive absentee ballots electronically. (By law, only voters who are permanently physically disabled or suffering from a long-term illness may receive permanent absentee ballot status).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 6 & 73 — RETURN OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Deems an absentee ballot as cast when properly signed by the voter and accepted by the town clerk; requires town clerks to retrieve ballots from absentee ballot drop boxes on each business day instead of each weekday

The bill deems an absentee ballot cast when it is (1) received, (2) signed by the voter on the return envelope's affirmation, and (3) accepted by the town clerk. Correspondingly, the bill repeals a provision allowing a voter to withdraw their absentee ballot.

The bill also requires town clerks to retrieve ballots from absentee ballot drop boxes on each business day instead of each weekday as

under current law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 7 — ABSENTEE BALLOT CURING

Establishes procedures for voters to cure their absentee ballots if they failed to sign the return envelope

The bill establishes procedures for voters to "cure" their absentee ballots if they failed to sign the required statement on the return envelope. Under the bill, voters may cure their ballots from the beginning of the absentee voting period until the close of the polls on election day.

The bill requires town clerks to make their best efforts to contact a voter who failed to sign the envelope, but generally not later than 24 hours after receiving the voter's ballot. For ballots received within 24 hours before the polls close, the town clerk must start using best efforts immediately after receiving the ballot.

Under the bill, "best efforts" must at least include contacting voters through the phone numbers and email addresses they provide on the absentee ballot application and voter registration. If this information was not provided, the clerk may exercise discretion in contacting the voter through other means.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 7 & 10 — ABSENTEE BALLOT PROCESSING DEADLINES

Modifies deadlines for sorting and processing absentee ballots

Town Clerk's Sorting and Delivery of Absentee Ballots to Registrars (§ 7)

The bill allows town clerks to begin sorting absentee ballots into voting districts on the first day absentee ballot sets are issued, instead of starting seven days before the election as under current law.

By law, the clerk must then deliver the absentee ballots to the registrars to be checked. Once the checking is complete, the registrars return the unopened ballots to the clerk, who must seal and hold them

until the election day. The clerk follows this procedure for all ballots received by 11:00 a.m. on the weekday before the election.

For ballots received before this time, the law establishes deadlines by which the clerk must deliver the stored absentee ballots to the registrars. The bill changes these deadlines as described in the table below.

Table: Deadlines for Delivering Absentee Ballots on Election Day

Type of Election Contest	*Current Law's Deadline*	*The Bill's Deadline*
Election	10:00 am – 12:00 pm or a mutually agreed upon time before 8:00 pm	8:00 am
Primary		
Referendum	12:00 pm or a mutually agreed upon time before 8:00 pm	
Special election or referendum	As above for regular contests	8:00 am or a mutually agreed upon time before 4:00 pm

State law, unchanged by the bill, also sets deadlines for delivering absentee ballots to the registrars that are received by the town clerk after 11:00 a.m. on the weekday before the election.

Absentee Ballot Counting (§ 10)

The bill requires absentee ballot counters to go to the counting location at least 15 minutes before the deadline for the clerks to deliver the absentee ballots to the registrars as described in the table above, instead of at the time the registrar designates as under current law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 8 — ABSENTEE BALLOT TRACKING SOFTWARE

Requires SOTS to develop and install absentee ballot tracking software

The bill also requires SOTS to develop and install absentee ballot-tracking software that is integrated with CVRS. At a minimum, the software must track (1) when an absentee ballot application is received and accepted by the town clerk; (2) when the ballot is (a) mailed out by the clerk, (b) delivered to the applicant, or (c) delivered to the clerk; and (3) whether the ballot was accepted, requires curing, or is rejected.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 9 — AUTOMATIC ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION STATUS

Creates procedures for voters to request that absentee ballot applications automatically be sent to them for elections they are eligible to vote in

The bill allows voters to submit a request to their local registrars, through procedures SOTS sets, to automatically receive absentee ballot applications for each election, primary, or referendum held in the municipality for which they are eligible to vote. All approved applicants must be issued an application as soon as practicable before the election contest. Under the bill, approved voters must continue to receive applications automatically until they (1) submit a written request for removal to the registrars or (2) are removed due to one of the reasons described below (generally similar to the existing triggers for removal from permanent absentee ballot status).

First, a voter's automatic absentee ballot application status must be removed if (1) they are removed from the municipality's official registry list or (2) the application is returned as undeliverable. Removal is also required if the voter is placed on the inactive registry list. Voters may be placed on the list for a variety of reasons under state law, including if registrars are notified about a person's death or disenfranchisement. A voter may also be placed on the inactive list if the registrar (1) has reason to believe that the voter moved, (2) sent notice as required by state law, and (3) did not receive a return card within 30 days after mailing it or it was returned undeliverable. State law establishes procedures for reactivating a person's registration if he or she has been placed on the inactive registry list.

Under the bill, the voter's automatic absentee ballot application status must also be removed if:

1. he or she submits a change of address form to the U.S. Postal Service's National Change of Address System indicating a new out-of-state address,

2. SOTS or the applicable registrar receives information from an out-of-state admitting official that the voter has registered to vote

there, or

3. the applicable registrar receives information or data from the statewide centralized voter registration system that the voter moved out of state (such as information from another state or the federal government used to update voter registration systems).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 22 — SEEC INVESTIGATORY AUTHORITY

Authorizes SEEC to investigate and resolve alleged violations concerning election regulations

Under existing law, the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) is authorized to investigate and act on alleged violations of state statute concerning elections, primaries, or referendums. The bill explicitly authorizes SEEC to investigate and act on violations of regulations adopted under these statutes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 29 — MUNICIPAL ELECTION FREQUENCY

Allow municipalities to hold municipal elections every four years if authorized by their charter

The bill authorizes, starting January 1, 2027, municipalities to hold municipal elections every four years if the municipal charter allows it, regardless of any other law. Under current law, municipalities must hold elections every two years.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

§ 30 — VOTER REGISTRATION

Narrows when registrars and their deputies or assistants may examine voter qualifications for voter registration purposes at a non-public place to a time agreed upon between the registrar and the applicant

State law outlines when voters may register to vote in person and have their voter qualifications examined, including submitting applications to the registrars, or their assistants or deputies, at any time at a non-public place in town. The bill specifies that this must be mutually agreed upon between the applicant and the registrar.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 31 — ELECTION DAY DUTIES OF ASSISTANT TOWN CLERKS

Adds assistant town clerks to an existing exemption for serving at a polling place even if on the ballot

State law generally prohibits candidates from serving as election officials or at the polls on election day. However, town clerks and registrars of voters may perform their official duties, even if they are on the ballot for the office they are already holding. Further, deputy registrars of voters may also do so even if running to be a registrar of voters. The bill similarly allows assistant town clerks running for town clerk to perform their official duties.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027

§ 32 — RELIEVING REGISTRARS OF VOTERS

Specifies SOTS may temporarily relieve deputy registrars and multiple registrars of voters within a municipality of their duties

Existing law allows SOTS to temporarily relieve a registrar of voters from duty, following certain procedures, if the registrar (1) failed to obtain or maintain their certification or (2) is subject to a SEEC investigation because SOTS filed a statement with SEEC. The bill specifies that SOTS may temporarily relieve one or more of a municipality's registrars of voters for these reasons and expands these provisions to also cover deputy registrars. As under existing law for registrars, nothing in these provisions prohibits a municipality from paying a deputy registrar's salary while these procedures are pending.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027

§ 33 — NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION-RELATED SUBPOENAS, WARRANTS, OR REQUESTS

Requires municipal officials and election workers to notify the AG and SOTS of a subpoena, warrant, or other request for or to inspect certain election records

The bill requires notification to certain state officials by all municipal officials and election workers that receive a subpoena, warrant, or other request for or to inspect any record or recording related to an election, primary, or referendum (including requests related to tabulators, ballot

boxes, or other devices used to conduct elections) (hereinafter "election records"). This includes all requests made by any private or governmental entity, individual, or official.

Municipal officials and election workers must provide a copy of the request to the AG and SOTS within 36 hours of receiving it. Both the AG and SOTS must post notice on their respective websites on how these copies may be provided to them. If SOTS directly receives the request, she must provide the AG's office a copy.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 34 — ATTORNEY GENERAL ACTION ON FEDERAL ELECTION INTERFERENCE

Authorizes the AG to seek certain court relief to prevent or resolve interference in elections for federal offices

The bill authorizes the AG to seek preliminary or permanent injunctive, declaratory, or other appropriate equitable relief (hereinafter "relief") to prevent or resolve interference in elections for presidential electors and congressional offices. He may do so by filing (1) a complaint alleging the interference with the Connecticut Supreme Court and (2) an attached certification that a copy of the complaint was sent by first-class mail or delivered to SOTS, SEEC, and all other interested parties. (The bill does not specify how other interested parties are determined at this point in the complaint process.)

If the AG makes the complaint after the election, it must be brought within 14 days of the election; if he makes it before the election, the judge must quickly proceed to render judgment and provide notice to SOTS and SEEC of the scheduled hearing.

The court, once it has received the complaint, must order any injunctive or declaratory relief necessary to preserve or restore the current situation (including ordering election workers to retain custody of certain election records).

Further, if exigent circumstances are shown, the court may make an immediate ex parte order (an order without a hearing) granting relief it

deems appropriate. If it does so, three to five days after making the order, the court must hold a complaint hearing. It must provide three to five days' notice of the hearing's time and place to any affected candidates and election workers, SOTS, SEEC, and any parties the judge deems proper.

The hearing must be conducted without unnecessary delay by the issuing judge and two other Supreme Court judges designated by the chief court administrator. If sufficient cause is shown, the judges may order (1) SEEC to maintain custody of any election records and (2) permanent relief in connection with an election worker's or SEEC's custody of election records.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§§ 35-37 — VOTING TABULATOR USE IN RECANVASSES

Allows moderators, under certain circumstances, to use different tabulators for conducting recounts than the ones used in the election

Under existing law, a moderator must initiate a recanvass (a recount) if it appears there are discrepancies in a voting district's returns. If so, the returns of all voting tabulators and absentee and write-in ballots in the municipality must be recanvassed, not just the returns within the voting district where the discrepancy occurred. Similarly, a recount is generally conducted in the case of a close or tie vote. The bill explicitly specifies that recanvasses due to a tie vote must be held in the same manner as voting discrepancy recanvasses.

Currently, the recanvass of voting tabulators is generally conducted with the tabulators used at the election site. The bill instead allows a recanvass to use different voting tabulators or high-speed voting tabulators if the recanvass is conducted (1) at SOTS' office or (2) within the municipality if SOTS agrees to the moderator's requests to borrow these tabulators.

The bill correspondingly authorizes (1) recanvasses to be conducted at SOTS' office and (2) SOTS to adopt related regulations.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§§ 38 & 39 — MAIL VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS

Specifies which federal voter registration forms SOTS must distribute and registrars must accept

Current law requires SOTS to provide the Federal Election Commission's mail voter registration application form and registrars to accept applications that use it. The bill instead requires they provide and accept applications that use the Election Assistance Commission's form.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 40 — ABSENTEE VOTING AND EARLY VOTING FOR CERTAIN 17-YEAR-OLD VOTERS

Allows citizens who are 17 years old and will be 18 years old before election day to vote by absentee ballot or use early voting for that election

The state constitution allows citizens who are 17 years old and will be 18 years old before election day to register to vote (and vote in a related primary). The bill specifies these voters, if registered and otherwise qualified as an elector, may vote by absentee ballot or use early voting. (It is unclear whether a 17-year-old citizen voting by absentee ballot or early voting under this provision constitutionally qualifies as an elector.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 41 — POLITICAL PARTY RULES

Requires political party rules to ensure the party's compliance with the ADA; requires disputes under party rules to be referred to the party's state central committee; specifies what minor party rules apply in a municipality if no local party exists

State law generally requires political parties to file their party rules with SOTS. These rules describe various aspects of the political party's operations, such as selecting or nominating individuals for political office. The bill additionally requires that these rules, and any amendments to them, ensure the party complies with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA; 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.). Additionally, the bill requires that any disputes arising under a party's rules be referred to the party's state central committee.

Relatedly, by law, minor party candidates may not be placed on a primary ballot unless the party files a copy of their party rules for

nominating candidates with SOTS at least 180 days before nominating candidates. Similarly, the minor party must file its rules for selecting town committee members and convention delegations at least 60 days before any selection. The minor party must also file a copy of the local party rules with the town clerks in the affected municipalities.

The bill specifies that if a minor party does not have a local party, the minor party rules that are filed with SOTS are deemed the rules for the enrolled members and candidates of that minor party for the applicable municipalities. State law has a similar requirement if a local party (major or minor) exists, but has not provided SOTS its rules.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

§ 42 — PROVIDING MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE NOMINATION FORMS

Modifies the deadline by which registrars must make petition forms for municipal candidates or town committee members available

Under current law, registrars must make petition forms for municipal candidates or town committee members available beginning on the day following the (1) party's endorsement of candidates for that position or (2) final day for endorsements under state law, whichever comes first. The bill eliminates the first deadline and just maintains the second.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

§ 43 — INVESTIGATIONS INTO COMPLAINTS REGARDING TOWN CLERKS

Narrows the circumstances under which the AG investigates referred complaints concerning town clerks

Under current law, if a written complaint is made to the AG that a town clerk is guilty of misconduct, willful and material neglect of duty, or incompetence in conducting any of their duties, the AG must investigate as he determines is proper and prepare a written statement of charges against the clerk.

The bill eliminates these provisions and instead allows the AG to investigate if SEEC consults with him concerning SEEC's investigations into election law violations. The bill also requires the written statement to detail the allegations against the clerk instead of the charges. As

under existing law, the AG has the power to, among other things, summon witnesses, require the production of necessary documents, and represent the state in removal hearings.

If after the investigation and a court hearing the court finds that the evidence warrants the clerk's removal, the court must order removal and the office is deemed vacant once the clerk is served with the order. The bill specifies the vacancy occurs regardless of any pending appeals of the court's order.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§§ 44-56 — RISK-LIMITING AUDITS

Implements RLAs for state elections; establishes an RLA pilot program for municipal elections

The bill implements risk-limiting audits (RLAs) for state elections but, generally, maintains the existing post-election audit process for federal and state primaries and municipal elections. RLAs are publicly verifiable auditing procedures that manually examine a statistical sample of paper ballots and guarantee a specified risk limit, which the bill caps at 5%.

To accomplish this, the bill establishes the general scope and procedures for RLAs, such as by (1) outlining election officials' duties and the affected public offices, (2) requiring the creation of ballot manifests, and (3) applying existing provisions for post-election audits to RLAs (such as those on using electronic equipment and voting tabulators and how to address election contests). The bill requires SOTS to set instructions and procedures for the audits. It also allows her to adopt related regulations.

The bill establishes a pilot program to do RLAs of state elections in 2026. It requires SOTS to randomly select three municipalities for the program, with one for each of the following population ranges, as estimated in the most recent State Register and Manual: (1) less than 20,000; (2) 20,000-89,999; and (3) 90,000 or greater (§ 13).

Additionally, current law requires regular post-election audits for

municipal elections and primaries to occur no earlier than five days after an election and no later than two business days before the town clerk's canvass for votes. Instead, under the bill, the audits for municipal elections must occur at least 15 days after the election or primary instead of five.

Lastly, the bill makes minor, technical, and conforming changes to existing election audit statutes, such as requiring a copy, rather than the original, of UConn's analysis to be submitted to SEEC.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027, except the pilot program is effective upon passage.

Definitions

The bill requires registrars of voters to do RLAs for state elections, instead of the current post-election audit process. Federal and state primaries, as well as municipal elections and primaries, remain subject to existing auditing requirements (see BACKGROUND).

Under the bill, an RLA is a publicly verifiable auditing procedure that (1) manually examines a statistical sample of paper ballots that reflect the intents of the voters who cast the ballots, (2) produces an outcome of either "ACCEPTABLE" or "INCONCLUSIVE," and (3) guarantees a specified risk limit.

The "risk limit" is the maximum probability that an audit would produce an outcome of "ACCEPTABLE" when there is a disagreement between the person declared elected and the person who got the most votes as determined by the paper ballots (in other words, the percentage chance an RLA will fail to catch that the reported results are incorrect). The bill caps the risk limit for RLAs at 5% (presumably, SOTS will set the specific limit in her prescribed procedures or in regulation; see below).

Covered Offices

Under the bill, an RLA must be done on the election outcomes for the following offices:

1. presidential elector;

2. all state offices for which all electors of the state may vote, including governor, lieutenant governor, SOTS, treasurer, comptroller, attorney general, and senator in Congress;

3. at least one representative in Congress, selected by random draw;

4. at least 5% of the General Assembly, selected by random draw; and

5. any other office for which federal law requires an audit.

However, the bill excludes a contest from an RLA if (1) the candidate ran unopposed or (2) it is subject to recanvass because of a close or tie vote (in practice, close or tie votes already require a full recount). If an office for a Congressional representative or state legislator is subject to recanvass for a reason other than a close or tie vote, or to an election contest, SOTS must ensure that office is selected for an RLA. The bill requires the random draws to be open to the public.

Pre-Audit Ballot Manifests

The bill requires election officials to create ballot manifests for use at RLAs following procedures established by SOTS and open to public observation. Although undefined by the bill, a ballot manifest is generally a detailed description of how ballots are stored and organized, listing, at minimum, the physical location of every ballot cast in the election so that individual ballots or batches of ballot cards can be found, retrieved, and examined manually.

Under the bill, a ballot manifest must be created as outlined in procedures SOTS provides. The manifests must be created by:

1. election officials in each polling place within 72 hours after the polls close;

2. ballot counters in each central counting location for absentee, early voting, and same-day election registration ballots within 72 hours after the polls close; and

3. recanvass officials within 24 hours after completing any recanvass in a voting district for a state election.

Under the bill, the moderator must submit a ballot manifest to the registrars of voters immediately after creating it. The registrars must then submit it to SOTS before the designated day to begin an RLA.

Designated Day

Like post-election audits for federal and state races, the bill requires SOTS to designate a day for an RLA to begin, which must be at least 15 days after a state election but at least two business days before the canvass of votes. Each audit must have advance notice and be open to the public.

Conducting an Audit

Under the bill, registrars of voters do the RLAs. SOTS must set instructions and procedures for doing them by January 1, 2027, that are consistent for all offices subject to these audits. The bill also allows her to adopt associated regulations and set guidelines for expanded audits when audit results cannot be reconciled with the outcome of the person declared elected by having the greatest number of votes, as determined by the paper ballots (the "reported results").

If an RLA for a particular office is "INCONCLUSIVE," the secretary must order a manual recount of all ballots cast for that office. She may also issue an order, as under current law, to correct any irregularity or impropriety in an RLA's conduct.

Reporting Results

As under current law, all audit results, including RLAs, must be filed with SOTS on a form she sets. SOTS must immediately forward the results to UConn, which must analyze them and submit a written report describing any identified concerns to SOTS. She must then send SEEC a copy of UConn's written report.

Electronic Equipment and Voting Tabulators

The bill extends several of existing law's provisions on using

electronic equipment and voting tabulators in post-election audits to also cover RLAs (CGS §§ 9-320f & 9-320g). Principally, it:

1. allows SOTS, after consulting with UConn, to authorize the use of electronic equipment;

2. requires her to have access to the code in any voting machine whenever there is a problem due to an RLA;

3. directs her or her designee to examine and recertify a tabulator if UConn's analysis indicates that it failed to record votes accurately and as required by state law;

4. requires carefully preserving and returning paper ballots used in an RLA in their designated receptacle (such as returned to the ballot box, securely sealed, and locked);

5. requires SOTS, if audit officials cannot reconcile the audit results with the reported results, to investigate voting tabulators as needed to determine if they must be (a) decertified or (b) examined and recertified; and

6. authorizes SOTS, SEEC, or a court with competent jurisdiction to issue an order after a state election to keep a voting tabulator locked for longer than law requires.

The bill allows either the court or SOTS to order an audit of the voting tabulator by people they designate, but SEEC may order an audit if SOTS is the office in question. If SOTS produces a report on an investigation of a voting tabulator, it must be filed with SEEC, which may investigate further to determine if there was an election law violation.

Under the bill, if the machine in question is an optical scan voting system, an order to lock it must include the tabulator, memory card, and all other parts and processes used in its programming.

Town Clerk Reporting to SOTS

By law, each municipal clerk must give SOTS a statement with the

names, post office addresses, and terms of each person elected to office in a municipal election. The bill requires this statement to be filed by the last day of the month in which the election was held, instead of within 10 days after the election as under current law.

Election Official Compensation

Under the bill, municipalities must compensate election officials who participate in implementing an RLA at the municipality's standard rate of pay for elections.

Regional Election Advisors

As with post-election audits, the bill requires regional election advisors to consult and coordinate with SOTS in the preparation for and operation of RLAs, including communicating with and helping registrars of voters.

Election Complaints and Evidence

Like post-election audit results, the bill requires RLA-reported results to be open to public inspection and allows them to be used as prima facie evidence of an irregularity in a contested election or for any other cause of action from a contested election.

The bill also specifies that (1) an action or complaint may be brought in response to any state election audit, not just the manual tabulations of paper ballots, and (2) its RLA provisions do not preclude a candidate or elector from seeking other existing remedies for contested elections.

§ 57 — PROHIBITED ACTS NEAR AN ELECTIONS SITE

Generally prohibits law enforcement from knowingly being within 250 feet of an elections site, with certain exceptions, or being within this perimeter to check voter qualifications; prohibits anyone from wearing a mask or other covering within 250 feet of an election site, with certain exceptions; establishes criminal penalties for violations and disenfranchises individuals for certain violations

The bill generally prohibits certain acts near elections sites and subjects violators to a criminal penalty. Under the bill, "elections sites" include the following:

1. polling places on the day of an election, primary, or referendum;

2. early voting locations during an early voting period;

3. same-day election registration locations on election day or during the early voting period;

4. central ballot counting locations;

5. recanvass locations; and

6. drop boxes during the absentee voting period.

Prohibited Actions by Certain Officers, Agents, and Those That Control Them

The bill generally prohibits officers and agents authorized by any state or the federal government to use force against, search, detain, or arrest people, and those that control these officers, from knowingly being within 250 feet of any elections site. However, these officers and agents, and those that control them, may be within this perimeter if:

1. voting while off-duty as allowed by state law;

2. engaging in protected political expression while off-duty;

3. in transit to another location;

4. they reside within the perimeter;

5. the governor deems it necessary for them to use force to repel armed enemies of the U.S. or the state;

6. the person is conducting a search, detention, or arrest and (a) is acting in their official capacity, (b) notified SOTS and the AG at least 24 hours before, (c) has a legal judicial warrant or order to specifically conduct these activities within the 250-foot perimeter and at the specific location, and (d) is present only as along as reasonably necessary to conduct the activity;

7. exigent circumstances reasonably require it to protect against a serious threat to life or property, but only as long as reasonably necessary to do so; or

8. SOTS or the moderator (a) requests force to suppress disorder or (b) gives permission (and the permission has not been withdrawn).

The bill also prohibits these individuals from engaging in conduct that would violate federal laws that prohibit (1) stationing military forces at locations where elections are being held, (2) military forces from interfering with elections, and (3) government employees from interfering with elections for federal offices (see BACKGROUND).

Additionally, the bill specifically prohibits these officers, agents, and supervisors from (1) knowingly being within 250 feet of an elections site to attempt to examine voter qualifications or (2) loitering or remaining within this perimeter.

Under the bill, any violation of these provisions is a class C felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison, up to a $10,000 fine, or both. Further, any person who violates these provisions must be disenfranchised. (The bill does not specify the process for disenfranchising a person, such as providing notice to election officials that a person may not vote or hold public office. It is also unclear how the state's existing electoral rights forfeiture and restoration laws apply to this provision (CGS §§ 9-46 & 9-46a).)

Prohibited Actions by the General Public

Under the bill, no person may be required to present any identification within 250 feet of an elections site unless required by state law. However, this provision does not prevent election, primary, or referendum officials from performing their election duties under state law. Further, under the bill, actions taken by an officer or agent conducting an authorized search, detention, or arrest as described above are not a violation.

The bill also prohibits any person from wearing a mask or covering that obscures their face, head, or identity within 250 feet of an elections site unless it is (1) medically necessary or of religious significance or (2) reasonable given the weather conditions if the person complies with a

moderator's request to remove the mask or covering.

The bill makes it a class D felony to (1) violate the voter identification prohibition or (2) willfully violate the mask prohibition or refuse to comply with a moderator's request to remove a mask or other covering. A class D felony is punishable by up to 5 years in prison, up to a $5,000 fine, or both.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 58 — HARASSMENT OF ELECTION WORKERS

Increases the penalty for subsequent offenses of an existing prohibition against harassing election workers to interfere with their election day duties; expands existing harassment protections to assistant town clerks

Under current law, it is a class A misdemeanor (punishable by up to 364 days in prison, up to a $2,000 fine, or both) to publicly disclose an election worker's personal identifying information (such as name, birthdate, and Social Security number) with the intent to harass, terrorize, or alarm the worker or influence them in performing their election administration duties. The bill makes subsequent offenses a class C felony.

It also expands the definition of "election worker" to include assistant municipal clerks, in addition to municipal clerks; registrars of voters; deputy registrars; and election, primary, and recanvass officials as under current law. In doing so, the bill:

1. extends the above penalties to anyone who publicly discloses an assistant municipal clerk's personal identifying information as described above;

2. subjects anyone who influences (or attempts to) an assistant municipal clerk performing election administration duties to a class C felony, as is the case for other election workers under current law (this includes influencing the election worker by force, threat, or harassment); and

3. gives assistant municipal clerks a civil cause of action against violators of the above provisions, as is the case for other election

workers under current law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 59 — PROHIBITION ON SHARING TABULATORS OR TABULATOR PARTS WITH UNAUTHORIZED THIRD PARTIES

Makes it a class D felony for an election official to give a third party any tabulator or tabulator part or appliance unless authorized by SOTS

Under existing law, it is generally a class D felony for an election official to tamper with voting tabulators or alter ballots read by the tabulators. The bill additionally makes it a class D felony for an election official to give a third party any tabulator or tabulator part or appliance (unless authorized by SOTS).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 60 — ABSENTEE BALLOT DROP BOX TAMPERING

Penalizes several acts concerning absentee ballot drop boxes, including tampering with them, the ballots inside, or ballots removed from them

State law authorizes voters to cast their absentee ballots by depositing them in designated drop boxes during the absentee voting period. The bill establishes a new criminal penalty for certain acts related to these drop boxes. Specifically, it makes it a class D felony to knowingly do the following:

1. tamper with, alter, destroy, or unlawfully carry away a drop box;

2. change or destroy a ballot after it has been deposited;

3. fraudulently deposit additional ballots into a drop box with those lawfully deposited, before or after they have been counted, and falsely claiming the additional ballots were lawfully deposited, with the intent to interrupt or invalidate an election contest; or

4. fraudulently add a ballot to those retrieved from drop boxes during the counting or recanvassing of ballots, with the intent of affecting the election contest or to enter any ballot as evidence in election complaint hearings.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 61 — ATTORNEY GENERAL AUTHORITY TO BRING AN ACTION

Expands the AG's authority to investigate, intervene in, and take certain actions when anyone has established a policy that deprives or interferes with another person's civil rights; specifies that interfering with another person's civil rights (or attempting to) includes doing so by physical obstruction

Existing state law authorizes the AG to investigate, intervene in, and bring civil or administrative actions on behalf of the state seeking injunctive or declaratory relief, damages, and any other relief that may be available under law, whenever there is a practice or pattern of conduct that:

1. deprives persons of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the U.S. or Connecticut constitutions or laws (civil rights) or

2. interferes, or attempts to interfere by threats, intimidation, or coercion, with another persons' exercise or enjoyment of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the U.S. or Connecticut constitutions or laws.

The bill expands the AG's authority to take these actions on behalf of the state by also allowing him to do so when anyone has established a policy that deprives or interferes with another person's civil rights in the ways described above. It also specifies that interfering with another person's civil rights (or attempting to) includes doing so by physical obstruction.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 62 — TECHNICAL CHANGE CONCERNING TABULATOR TESTING AT SDR LOCATIONS

Makes a technical change concerning tabulators at SDR locations

Current law requires that registrars set, adjust, test, and deliver voting tabulators to polling places, including early voting and same-day registration (SDR) locations, at least one hour before they open. The bill eliminates this requirement for SDR locations which , in practice, do not have dedicated tabulators (as ballots cast there are counted at a central location).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 63-64 & 73 — REGISTRAR TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Establishes certification requirements for deputy registrars of voters and makes conforming changes; repeals a duplicative registrar training requirement

By law, SOTS, in consultation with an advisory committee, must establish a program and criteria for certifying registrars of voters. The bill expands this program to deputy registrars of voters and requires that they be certified, instead of making certification optional as under current law.

Specifically, deputy registrars taking office on or before July 1, 2026, must complete the program and meet the criteria for certification by July 1, 2028. Deputy registrars taking office after July 1, 2026, must, if elected for a (1) two-year term, be certified by the end of their term or (2) four-year term, be certified within two years of taking office. Correspondingly, the bill eliminates provisions requiring deputy registrars who become registrars under certain circumstances to complete an abridged version of the program.

The bill expands existing provisions on registrars to also cover deputy registrars, including requiring (1) towns to pay the costs of completing the program and obtaining this certification, (2) deputy registrars to annually complete eight hours of continuing education to retain their certification, and (3) SOTS to direct deputy registrars to take remedial measures she requires if a deputy fails to meet the annual training requirement.

Relatedly, the bill specifies if a deputy registrar becomes a registrar due to the death, removal, or resignation of the registrar, the deputy's certification (completing the program and meeting the criteria) carries forward for the remainder of the term.

Existing law also requires towns to compensate municipal clerks and registrars of voters that attend two election law conferences SOTS holds (generally, $35 per day and a mileage rate). Under current law, in the absence of a municipality's registrar, the municipality must compensate the deputy registrar's cost if he or she attends. Under the bill,

municipalities must always compensate a deputy registrar, regardless of the registrar's absence.

The bill also repeals a duplicative requirement that each registrar of voters annually designate themselves, a deputy registrar, or an assistant registrar to receive at least 10 hours of instruction in a registrar certification course created by SOTS. It also makes conforming changes concerning SOTS and the advisory committee's duties.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 65-68 — CORRECTION OF CERTAIN CERTIFICATES BY SOTS

Requires SOTS, if she notices an error or omission in certain candidate certificates, to make her best efforts to notify the affected candidate so it may be corrected

By law, SOTS may amend endorsement certificates, certificates of candidacies for nomination, and certificates of nomination to correct certain errors or omissions, but must maintain a record of any amendment she makes. The law specifies that the secretary is not required to evaluate these certificates to identify possible errors or omissions. However, under the bill, if she does identify one, she must make best efforts to notify the affected candidate so an authorized individual can correct it. (The bill does not specify what constitutes "best efforts.")

As under existing law, if a timely-filed certificate contains an error or omission that would invalidate it, only the candidate or an individual authorized to act on his or her behalf may correct the issue by appearing in person at the secretary of the state's office to amend it. If the candidate or individual does not correct the certificate, it is deemed invalid and the party is deemed to have neither made nor certified the endorsement or candidacy for nomination, whichever applies.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 69 — NOTIFICATION OF ELECTRONIC POLL BOOK USE

Specifies electronic poll books may only be used as a backup to the paper-based poll book when checking in voters; requires registrars to provide certain notice if they plan to do so

By law, registrars must use a paper-based list for checking in voters

on election day or for early voting, and may only use electronic lists (electronic poll books) as authorized by SOTS. The bill codifies current practice by specifying electronic lists may only be used in conjunction with the official paper-based list.

Additionally, if the registrars plan to use an electronic list, they must post conspicuous written notice on the municipality's website and at a readily accessible place at town hall or the town's municipal building at least 14 days before (1) any election or primary early voting period or (2) a referendum.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027

§ 70 — ABSENTEE BALLOTS IN UNCONSOLIDATED CITIES AND BOROUGHS TASK FORCE

Establishes a task force to study absentee ballot access in certain cities and boroughs in the state that are unconsolidated with the towns where they are located

The bill creates a nine-person task force to study absentee ballot access in certain cities and boroughs in the state that are unconsolidated with the towns where they are located. For elections, primaries, and referenda in these cities and boroughs, the task force must examine possible absentee ballot application procedures and delivery methods (including having absentee ballots include the ballot items to be voted on by both the (1) unconsolidated city or borough and (2) town where it is located).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

Membership

The task force's membership consists of seven appointed members as well as SOTS and UConn's Center for Voting Research Technology director, or their designees. The appointed members are appointed as described in the table below.

Table: Task Force Appointed Members

Appointing Authority	*Appointee Qualifications*
House speaker	A town clerk for a town that contains all or part of an unconsolidated city or borough

Appointing Authority	*Appointee Qualifications*
Senate president pro tempore	A clerk for an unconsolidated city or borough
House majority leader	None (but may be a legislator)
Senate majority leader	A registrar of voters for a town that contains all or part of an unconsolidated city or borough
House minority leader	None (but may be a legislator)
Senate minority leader	A registrar of voters for a town that contains all or part of an unconsolidated city or borough
SOTS	An attorney with state election law expertise

Appointing authorities must make their initial appointments within 30 days after the bill's passage and fill any vacancy.

Leadership and Meetings

Under the bill, SOTS or her designee must chair the taskforce and schedule and hold the first meeting within 60 days after the bill passes. The Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee's administrative staff serve in this capacity for the task force.

Reports

By January 1, 2027, the task force must report its findings and recommendations to the GAE Committee. The task force ends when it makes this report or on January 1, 2027, whichever is later.

§§ 71 & 72 — VOTER PARTICIPATION EFFORTS

Establishes a task force to study achieving 100% voter participation; allows municipalities to conduct pilot programs to achieve this

The bill allows municipalities, within existing resources, to establish a pilot program to promote the goal of achieving 100% voter participation. The program may include efforts to enhance civic engagement, such as voter outreach and education campaigns. The bill specifies that these pilot programs are subject to the state's election laws and municipal restrictions on diverging from certain state election policies.

The bill also establishes a nine-member task force to study (1) efforts to achieve 100% voter participation in the state by January 1, 2030, and potential implementation options; (2) ways to generally enhance civic engagement; (3) the experiences of jurisdictions that require citizens to

vote; (4) municipal officials' needs in administering elections with 100% participation; and (5) needed budgetary resources to achieve 100% participation.

The task force members include the secretary of the state, or her designee, and eight members appointed as follows:

1. two by the governor and

2. one by each of the six legislative leaders.

Members appointed by the legislative leaders may be legislators. The bill requires (1) initial appointments to be made by August 1, 2026, and (2) the first meeting to be held by September 1, 2026. The appointing authority must fill any vacancy. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must select the chairpersons, who must schedule the first meeting. The GAE Committee's administrative staff must serve as the task force's administrative staff.

By February 1, 2027, the task force must submit a report to the GAE Committee on its findings and recommendations, including any potential legislation to direct resources or funds to municipalities to increase voter participation. The task force ends when it submits its report or February 1, 2027, whichever is later.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

BACKGROUND

Required Voter Identification Under Federal Law

By law, if a voter registers to vote by mail and does not meet federal identification requirements at the time of registration, the voter must give sufficient identification the first time they seek to vote absentee. If a voter fails to do so, the absentee ballot cannot be counted. Acceptable forms of identification include certain documents with the voter's name and address (such as bank statements or utility bills) or valid photo identification with the voter's name and address (CGS § 9-23r).

Peace Officers

By law, the following people are designated peace officers: state and local police, Division of Criminal Justice inspectors, state marshals exercising statutory powers, judicial marshals performing their duties, conservation or special conservation officers, constables who perform criminal law enforcement duties, appointed special police officers, adult probation officers, DOC officials authorized to make arrests in a correctional institution or facility, investigators in the State Treasurer's Office, certified Department of Motor Vehicles inspectors, U.S. marshals and deputy marshals, U.S. special agents authorized to enforce federal food and drug laws, and certified police officers of a law enforcement unit created and governed under a state-tribal memorandum (CGS § 53a-3(9)).

Post-Election Audit Procedure

Under current law, SOTS must audit at least 5% of the state's voting districts (meaning polling locations), selected at random after a federal, state, or municipal regular election or primary. Audits must be noticed in advance and open for public observation. Registrars of voters must do the audits by hand unless SOTS, in consultation with UConn, authorizes them to be done electronically (CGS § 9-320f).

During the audit, registrars tally the paper ballots cast by voters and counted by each optical scan voting tabulator subject to the audit. They compare their results to the reported results. Registrars must report the audit results on a SOTS-prescribed form with the total number of ballots counted and the total votes for each audited candidate, broken down by whether the ballot was properly or improperly completed.

After a post-election audit, SOTS must order a recount (a recanvass) for an office if there is a discrepancy that could affect its outcome. (If SOTS is a candidate on the ballot that is subject to an audit, SEEC orders the recount.) For this purpose, a "discrepancy" is a difference between the voting tabulator and audit vote counts that exceeds 0.5% of the lower total, where the difference cannot be resolved through an accounting of ballots that were improperly marked (CGS § 9-320f(f) & (o)).

Federal Laws Concerning Election Interference

Federal law generally prohibits civil or military officers from ordering or placing troops or armed individuals at any place where a general or special election is being held (18 U.S.C. § 592). Relatedly, it also prohibits armed forces members from (1) setting voter qualifications for elections; (2) using force, threats, or other means to prevent or attempt to prevent voters from voting; (3) forcing election officials to receive a vote from someone who is not qualified to vote; (4) imposing election regulations that differ from the law; or (5) interfering with an election official's duties (18 U.S.C. § 593).

It also prohibits anyone employed in an administrative position in the United States or serving as a municipal, state, or federal government employee, among others, from using their official authority to interfere or affect the nomination or election of a candidate for president, vice president, U.S. senator, U.S. representative, or representatives from U.S. territories or the District of Columbia (18 U.S.C. § 595).

Related Bills

sSB 91 (File 491), reported favorably by the Judiciary Committee, restricts taking people into custody based on a civil offense in state or municipal facilities and protected areas.

sSB 394 (File 564), reported favorably by the Appropriations and GAE committees, contains substantially identical provisions concerning RLAs.

SB 395 (File 497), reported favorably by the GAE Committee, among other things, contains substantially identical provisions on voter participation efforts.

sSB 397 (File 399), reported favorably by the Judiciary Committee, restricts taking people into custody for a civil offense in state or municipal facilities or protected areas and prohibits, with certain exceptions, wearing a facial covering or personal disguise when interacting with the public and performing law enforcement duties.

sSB 459 (File 500), reported favorably by the GAE Committee,

generally prohibits acquiring absentee ballot applications for others or giving them to others, with certain exceptions.

sSB 463 (File 570) and sHB 5533 (File 548), reported favorably by the GAE and Judiciary committees, among other things, contains substantially identical provisions on (1) prohibiting certain activities near election sites, (2) expanding election worker protections to assistant town clerks, (3) prohibitions concerning tabulators and absentee ballot drop boxes, (4) municipal official and election worker notification to certain state officials of election-related requests, and (5) AG authority regarding certain election interference and civil rights claims.

sSB 491 (File 581), reported favorably by the GAE Committee, among other things, contains substantially identical absentee balloting provisions.

HB 5529 (File 546), reported favorably by the GAE Committee, requires notification when using electronic poll books to certain entities and establishes a fine for failing to do so.

HB 5530 (File 521), reported favorably by the GAE Committee, contains substantially similar requirements for a study of absentee ballot access in unconsolidated cities and boroughs within a town.

sHB 5544 (File 550), reported favorably by the GAE Committee, allows towns to move municipal election dates to align with state elections.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 13 Nay 6 (03/20/2026)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 40 Nay 13 (04/17/2026)