



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 194**

February Session, 2026

Substitute House Bill No. 5344

*House of Representatives, March 26, 2026*

The Committee on Government Administration and Elections reported through REP. BLUMENTHAL of the 147th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## **AN ACT CONCERNING SUPERIOR COURT VENUE FOR ELECTION CASES.**

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

1 Section 1. Section 9-324 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and*  
3 *applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

4 (a) Any elector or candidate who claims that such elector or candidate  
5 is aggrieved by any ruling of any election official in connection with any  
6 election for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the State, State  
7 Treasurer, Attorney General, State Comptroller or judge of probate, held  
8 in such elector's or candidate's town, or that there has been a mistake in  
9 the count of the votes cast at such election for candidates for said offices  
10 or any of them, at any voting district in such elector's or candidate's  
11 town, or any candidate for such an office who claims that such candidate  
12 is aggrieved by a violation of any provision of [section] sections 9-355,  
13 9-357 to 9-361, inclusive, or section 9-364, 9-364a or 9-365 in the casting  
14 of absentee ballots at such election or any candidate for the office of  
15 Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the State, State Treasurer,  
16 Attorney General or State Comptroller, who claims that such candidate

17 is aggrieved by a violation of any provision of sections 9-700 to 9-716,  
18 inclusive, may bring such elector's or candidate's complaint [to any  
19 judge of the Superior Court, in which such] in the superior court for the  
20 judicial district of Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport. Such  
21 elector or candidate shall set out in the complaint the claimed errors of  
22 such election official, the claimed errors in the count or the claimed  
23 violations of said sections. In any action brought pursuant to the  
24 provisions of this section, the complainant shall send a copy of the  
25 complaint by first-class mail, or deliver a copy of the complaint by hand,  
26 to the State Elections Enforcement Commission. If such complaint is  
27 made prior to such election, [such judge] the court shall proceed  
28 expeditiously to render judgment on the complaint and shall cause  
29 notice of the hearing to be given to the Secretary of the State and the  
30 State Elections Enforcement Commission. If such complaint is made  
31 subsequent to the election, it shall be brought not later than fourteen  
32 days after the election or, if such complaint is brought in response to the  
33 manual tabulation of paper ballots authorized pursuant to section 9-  
34 320f, such complaint shall be brought not later than seven days after the  
35 close of any such manual tabulation. [and, in either such circumstance,  
36 such judge]

37 (b) The court shall forthwith order a hearing to be [had] held upon  
38 [such] a complaint filed under subsection (a) of this section, upon a day  
39 not more than five nor less than three days from the making of such  
40 order, and shall cause notice of not less than three nor more than five  
41 days to be given to any candidate or candidates whose election may be  
42 affected by the decision upon such hearing, to such election official, the  
43 Secretary of the State, the State Elections Enforcement Commission and  
44 to any other party or parties whom [such judge] the court deems proper  
45 parties thereto, of the time and place for the hearing upon such  
46 complaint. [Such judge] The court shall, on the day fixed for such  
47 hearing and without unnecessary delay, proceed to hear the parties. If  
48 sufficient reason is shown, [such judge] the court may order any voting  
49 tabulators to be unlocked or any ballot boxes to be opened and a recount  
50 of the votes cast, including absentee ballots, to be made. [Such judge]  
51 The court shall thereupon, in case [such judge] the court finds any error

52 in the rulings of the election official, any mistake in the count of the votes  
53 or any violation of [said sections] any provision of sections 9-355, 9-357  
54 to 9-361, inclusive, section 9-364, 9-364a or 9-365 or sections 9-700 to 9-  
55 716, inclusive, certify the result of [such judge's] the court's finding or  
56 decision to the Secretary of the State before the fifteenth day of the next  
57 succeeding December. [Such judge] The court may order a new election  
58 or a change in the existing election schedule. [Such certificate of such  
59 judge of such judge's]

60 (c) The certificate of the court's finding or decision pursuant to  
61 subsection (b) of this section shall be final and conclusive upon all  
62 questions relating to errors in the rulings of such election officials, to the  
63 correctness of such count, and, for the purposes of this section only, such  
64 claimed violations, and shall operate to correct the returns of the  
65 moderators or presiding officers, so as to conform to such finding or  
66 decision, unless the same is appealed from as provided in section 9-325,  
67 as amended by this act.

68 Sec. 2. Section 9-325 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
69 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and*  
70 *applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

71 If, upon any such hearing [by a judge of the Superior Court] in the  
72 superior court for the judicial district of Hartford or for the judicial  
73 district of Bridgeport, any question of law is raised which any party to  
74 the complaint claims should be reviewed by the Supreme Court, [such  
75 judge] the court, instead of filing the certificate of [his] the court's  
76 finding or decision with the Secretary of the State, shall transmit the  
77 same, including therein such questions of law, together with a proper  
78 finding of facts, to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who shall  
79 thereupon call a special session of [said court] the Supreme Court for  
80 the purpose of an immediate hearing upon the questions of law so  
81 certified. A copy of the finding and decision so certified by [the judge of  
82 the Superior Court] such superior court, together with the decision of  
83 the Supreme Court, on the questions of law therein certified, shall be  
84 attested by the clerk of the Supreme Court, and by [him] such clerk

85 transmitted to the Secretary of the State forthwith. The finding and  
86 decision of [the judge of the Superior Court] such superior court,  
87 together with the decision of the Supreme Court on the questions of law  
88 thus certified, shall be final and conclusive upon all questions relating  
89 to errors in the rulings of the election officials and to the correctness of  
90 such count and shall operate to correct the returns of the moderators or  
91 presiding officers so as to conform to such decision of [said court] the  
92 Supreme Court. Nothing in this section shall be considered as  
93 prohibiting an appeal to the Supreme Court from a final judgment of  
94 [the Superior Court] such superior court. The judges of the Supreme  
95 Court may establish rules of procedure for the speedy and inexpensive  
96 hearing of such appeals within fifteen days of such judgment of [a judge  
97 of the Superior Court] such superior court.

98 Sec. 3. Section 9-328 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
99 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and*  
100 *applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

101 (a) Any elector or candidate claiming to have been aggrieved by any  
102 ruling of any election official in connection with an election for any  
103 municipal office or a primary for justice of the peace, or any elector or  
104 candidate claiming that there has been a mistake in the count of votes  
105 cast for any such office at such election or primary, or any candidate in  
106 such an election or primary claiming that [he] such candidate is  
107 aggrieved by a violation of any provision of sections 9-355, 9-357 to 9-  
108 361, inclusive, or section 9-364, 9-364a or 9-365 in the casting of absentee  
109 ballots at such election or primary, may bring a complaint [to any judge  
110 of the Superior Court] in the superior court for the judicial district of  
111 Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport for relief therefrom. In  
112 any action brought pursuant to the provisions of this section, the  
113 complainant shall send a copy of the complaint by first-class mail, or  
114 deliver a copy of the complaint by hand, to the State Elections  
115 Enforcement Commission. If such complaint is made prior to such  
116 election or primary, [such judge] the court shall proceed expeditiously  
117 to render judgment on the complaint and shall cause notice of the  
118 hearing to be given to the Secretary of the State and the State Elections

119 Enforcement Commission. If such complaint is made subsequent to  
120 such election or primary, it shall be brought not later than fourteen days  
121 after such election or primary, except that if such complaint is brought  
122 in response to the manual tabulation of paper ballots, authorized  
123 pursuant to section 9-320f, such complaint shall be brought not later  
124 than seven days after the close of any such manual tabulation, to any  
125 judge of [the Superior Court] such superior court, in which [he] such  
126 complainant shall set out the claimed errors of the election official, the  
127 claimed errors in the count or the claimed violations of [said sections.  
128 Such judge] any provision of sections 9-355, 9-357 to 9-361, inclusive, or  
129 section 9-364, 9-364a or 9-365.

130 (b) The court shall forthwith order a hearing to be [had] held upon  
131 [such] a complaint filed under subsection (a) of this section, upon a day  
132 not more than five nor less than three days from the making of such  
133 order, and shall cause notice of not less than three nor more than five  
134 days to be given to any candidate or candidates whose election or  
135 nomination may be affected by the decision upon such hearing, to such  
136 election official, the Secretary of the State, the State Elections  
137 Enforcement Commission and to any other party or parties whom [such  
138 judge] the court deems proper parties thereto, of the time and place for  
139 the hearing upon such complaint. [Such judge] The court shall, on the  
140 day fixed for such hearing and without unnecessary delay, proceed to  
141 hear the parties. If sufficient reason is shown, [he] the court may order  
142 any voting tabulators to be unlocked or any ballot boxes to be opened  
143 and a recount of the votes cast, including absentee ballots, to be made.  
144 [Such judge] The court shall thereupon, if [he] the court finds any error  
145 in the rulings of the election official or any mistake in the count of the  
146 votes, certify the result of [his] the court's finding or decision to the  
147 Secretary of the State before the tenth day succeeding the conclusion of  
148 the hearing. [Such judge] The court may order a new election or primary  
149 or a change in the existing election schedule. [Such certificate of such  
150 judge of his]

151 (c) The certificate of the court's finding or decision under subsection  
152 (b) of this section shall be final and conclusive upon all questions

153 relating to errors in the ruling of such election officials, to the correctness  
154 of such count, and, for the purposes of this section only, such claimed  
155 violations, and shall operate to correct the returns of the moderators or  
156 presiding officers, so as to conform to such finding or decision, except  
157 that this section shall not affect the right of appeal to the Supreme Court  
158 and [it] shall not prevent [such judge] such superior court from  
159 reserving such questions of law for the advice of the Supreme Court as  
160 provided in section 9-325, as amended by this act. Such [judge] superior  
161 court may, if necessary, issue [his] a writ of mandamus, requiring the  
162 adverse party and those under [him] such party to deliver to the  
163 complainant the appurtenances of such office, and shall cause [his] such  
164 superior court's finding and [decree] decision to be entered on the  
165 records of the Superior Court in the proper judicial district.

166 Sec. 4. Section 9-329a of the general statutes is repealed and the  
167 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and*  
168 *applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

169 (a) Any (1) elector or candidate aggrieved by a ruling of an election  
170 official in connection with any primary held pursuant to (A) section 9-  
171 423, 9-425 or 9-464, or (B) a special act, (2) elector or candidate who  
172 alleges that there has been a mistake in the count of the votes cast at such  
173 primary, or (3) candidate in such a primary who alleges that [he] such  
174 candidate is aggrieved by a violation of any provision of sections 9-355,  
175 9-357 to 9-361, inclusive, or section 9-364, 9-364a or 9-365 in the casting  
176 of absentee ballots at such primary, may bring [his] a complaint [to any  
177 judge of the Superior Court] in the superior court for the judicial district  
178 of Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport for appropriate  
179 action. In any action brought pursuant to the provisions of this section,  
180 the complainant shall file a certification attached to the complaint  
181 indicating that a copy of the complaint has been sent by first-class mail  
182 or delivered to the State Elections Enforcement Commission. If such  
183 complaint is made prior to such primary, [such judge] the court shall  
184 proceed expeditiously to render judgment on the complaint and shall  
185 cause notice of the hearing to be given to the Secretary of the State and  
186 the State Elections Enforcement Commission. If such complaint is made

187 subsequent to such primary, [it] such complaint shall be brought [,] not  
188 later than fourteen days after such primary [,] or, if such complaint is  
189 brought in response to the manual tabulation of paper ballots [,]  
190 described in section 9-320f, such complaint shall be brought [,] not later  
191 than seven days after the close of any such manual tabulation, [to any  
192 judge of the Superior Court] in such superior court.

193 (b) [Such judge] The court shall forthwith order a hearing to be held  
194 upon [such] a complaint filed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section,  
195 upon a day not more than five nor less than three days after the making  
196 of such order, and shall cause notice of not less than three days to be  
197 given to any candidate or candidates in any way directly affected by the  
198 decision upon such hearing, to such election official, to the Secretary of  
199 the State, the State Elections Enforcement Commission and to any other  
200 person or persons, whom [such judge] the court deems proper parties  
201 thereto, of the time and place of the hearing upon such complaint. [Such  
202 judge] The court shall, on the day fixed for such hearing, and without  
203 delay, proceed to hear the parties and determine the result. If, after  
204 hearing, sufficient reason is shown, [such judge] the court may order  
205 any voting tabulators to be unlocked or any ballot boxes to be opened  
206 and a recount of the votes cast, including absentee ballots, to be made.  
207 [Such judge] The court shall thereupon, if [he] the court finds any error  
208 in the ruling of the election official, any mistake in the count of the votes  
209 or any violation of [said sections] any provision of sections 9-355, 9-357  
210 to 9-361, inclusive, or section 9-364, 9-364a or 9-365, certify the result of  
211 [his] the court's finding or decision to the Secretary of the State before  
212 the tenth day following the conclusion of the hearing. [Such judge] The  
213 court may (1) determine the result of such primary; (2) order a change  
214 in the existing primary schedule; or (3) order a new primary if [he] the  
215 court finds that, but for the error in the ruling of the election official, any  
216 mistake in the count of the votes or any violation of [said sections] any  
217 provision of sections 9-355, 9-357 to 9-361, inclusive, or section 9-364, 9-  
218 364a or 9-365, the result of such primary might have been different and  
219 [he] the court is unable to determine the result of such primary.

220 (c) [The certification by the judge of his] The certificate of the court's

221 finding or decision under subsection (b) of this section shall be final and  
222 conclusive upon all questions relating to errors in the ruling of such  
223 election official, to the correctness of such count, and, for the purposes  
224 of this section only, such alleged violations, and shall operate to correct  
225 any returns or certificates filed by the election officials, unless the same  
226 is appealed from as provided in section 9-325, as amended by this act.  
227 In the event a new primary is held pursuant to such [Superior Court]  
228 order of such superior court, the result of such new primary shall be  
229 final and conclusive unless a complaint is brought pursuant to this  
230 section. The clerk of [the] such superior court shall forthwith transmit a  
231 copy of such findings and order to the Secretary of the State.

232 Sec. 5. Section 9-329b of the general statutes is repealed and the  
233 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and*  
234 *applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

235 [(a) At any time prior to a primary held before April 1, 2024, and  
236 pursuant to sections 9-423, 9-425 and 9-464, or a special act, or prior to  
237 any election held before April 1, 2024, the Superior Court may issue an  
238 order removing a candidate from a ballot where it is shown that such  
239 candidate is improperly on the ballot.]

240 [(b)] At any time prior to the commencement of the period of early  
241 voting at a primary held [on or after April 1, 2024, and] pursuant to  
242 sections 9-423, 9-425 and 9-464, or a special act, or prior to the  
243 commencement of the period of early voting at any election, [held on or  
244 after April 1, 2024, the Superior Court] the superior court for the judicial  
245 district of Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport may issue an  
246 order removing a candidate from a ballot where it is shown that such  
247 candidate is improperly on the ballot.

248 Sec. 6. Subparagraph (B) of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of section  
249 9-368j of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted  
250 in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought*  
251 *on or after July 1, 2026*):

252 (B) (i) In determining whether divergent voting patterns occur in a

253 municipality or whether a method of election in such municipality  
254 results in a dilutive effect on the vote of protected class members, the  
255 superior court for the judicial district [in which such municipality is  
256 located] of Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport (I) shall  
257 consider elections held prior to the filing of an action pursuant to this  
258 section as more probative than elections conducted after such filing, (II)  
259 shall consider evidence concerning elections for any municipal office in  
260 such municipality as more probative than evidence concerning elections  
261 for other offices, but may still afford probative value to evidence  
262 concerning elections for such other offices, (III) shall consider statistical  
263 evidence as more probative than nonstatistical evidence, (IV) in the case  
264 of claims brought on behalf of two or more protected classes that are  
265 politically cohesive in such municipality, shall combine members of  
266 such protected classes to determine whether voting by such combined  
267 protected class members is divergent from other electors and shall not  
268 require evidence that voting by each such protected class's members is  
269 separately divergent from such other electors, and (V) shall not require  
270 evidence concerning the intent of electors, elected officials or such  
271 municipality to discriminate against protected class members.

272 (ii) Evidence concerning the causes of, or reasons for, the occurrence  
273 of divergent voting patterns shall not be deemed relevant to the  
274 determination of whether divergent voting patterns occur or whether a  
275 method of election results in a dilutive effect on the vote of protected  
276 class members.

277 Sec. 7. Subdivision (1) of subsection (c) of section 9-368j of the general  
278 statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof  
279 (*Effective July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1,*  
280 *2026*):

281 (c) (1) In determining whether, based on the totality of the  
282 circumstances, an impairment of the right to vote for any protected class  
283 member in a municipality, or of the opportunity or ability of protected  
284 class members in a municipality to participate in the political process  
285 and elect candidates of their choice or otherwise influence the outcome

286 of elections, has occurred, the superior court for the judicial district [in  
287 which such municipality is located] of Hartford or for the judicial  
288 district of Bridgeport may consider factors that include, but are not  
289 limited to: (A) The history of discrimination in or affecting the  
290 municipality or state; (B) the extent to which protected class members  
291 have been elected to office in the municipality; (C) the use of any  
292 qualification for eligibility to be an elector or other prerequisite to  
293 voting, any statute, ordinance, regulation or other law regarding the  
294 administration of elections, or any standard, practice, procedure or  
295 policy, by the municipality that may enhance the dilutive effects of a  
296 method of election in such municipality; (D) the extent of any history of  
297 unequal access on the part of protected class members or candidates to  
298 election administration or campaign finance processes that determine  
299 which candidates will receive access to the ballot or financial or other  
300 support in a given election for an office of the municipality; (E) the  
301 extent to which protected class members in the municipality or state  
302 have historically made expenditures, as defined in section 9-601b, at  
303 lower rates than other individuals in such municipality or state; (F) the  
304 extent to which protected class members in the municipality or state  
305 vote at lower rates than other electors in the municipality or state, as  
306 applicable; (G) the extent to which protected class members in the  
307 municipality are disadvantaged, or otherwise bear the effects of public  
308 or private discrimination, in areas that may hinder their ability to  
309 participate effectively in the political process, such as education,  
310 employment, health, criminal justice, housing, transportation, land use  
311 or environmental protection; (H) the extent to which protected class  
312 members in the municipality are disadvantaged in other areas that may  
313 hinder their ability to participate effectively in the political process; (I)  
314 the use of overt or subtle racial appeals in political campaigns in the  
315 municipality or surrounding the adoption or maintenance of a  
316 challenged practice; (J) the extent to which candidates face hostility or  
317 barriers while campaigning due to their membership in a protected  
318 class; (K) a significant or recurring lack of responsiveness on the part of  
319 elected officials of the municipality to the particularized needs of a  
320 community or communities of protected class members, except that

321 compliance with a court order shall not be considered to be evidence of  
322 such responsiveness; and (L) whether the particular method of election,  
323 ordinance, regulation or other law regarding the administration of  
324 elections, standard, practice, procedure or policy was designed to  
325 advance, and does materially advance, a valid state interest.

326 Sec. 8. Subsection (d) of section 9-368j of the general statutes is  
327 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*  
328 *2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

329 (d) Any individual aggrieved by a violation of this section, any  
330 organization whose membership includes individuals aggrieved by  
331 such a violation or the Secretary of the State may file an action alleging  
332 a violation of this section in the superior court for the judicial district [in  
333 which such violation has occurred] of Hartford or for the judicial district  
334 of Bridgeport. Members of two or more protected classes that are  
335 politically cohesive in a municipality may jointly file such an action in  
336 such court.

337 Sec. 9. Subdivision (1) of subsection (e) of section 9-368j of the general  
338 statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof  
339 (*Effective July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1,*  
340 *2026*):

341 (e) (1) Notwithstanding any provision of this title and any special act,  
342 charter or home rule ordinance, whenever the superior court for [a] the  
343 judicial district of Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport finds  
344 a violation by a municipality [within such judicial district] of any  
345 provision of this section, such court shall order appropriate remedies  
346 that are tailored to address such violation in such municipality and to  
347 ensure protected class members have equitable opportunities to fully  
348 participate in the political process and that can be implemented in a  
349 manner that will not unduly disrupt the administration of an ongoing  
350 or imminent election. Such court shall take into account the ability of  
351 officials who administer elections in such municipality to implement  
352 any change to voting for an ongoing or imminent election in a manner  
353 that is orderly and fiscally sound, and shall not order any remedy that

354 contravenes the Constitution of Connecticut. Appropriate remedies  
355 may include, but need not be limited to: (A) A district-based method of  
356 election; (B) an alternative method of election; (C) new or revised  
357 districting or redistricting plans; (D) elimination of staggered elections  
358 so that all members of the legislative body are elected at the same time;  
359 (E) reasonably increasing the size of the legislative body; (F) additional  
360 voting days or hours; (G) additional polling places; (H) additional  
361 means of voting, such as voting by mail, or additional opportunities to  
362 return ballots; (I) holding of special elections; (J) expanded  
363 opportunities for admission of electors; (K) additional elector education;  
364 (L) the restoration or addition of individuals to registry lists; or (M)  
365 retaining jurisdiction for such period of time as the court may deem  
366 appropriate, during which period no qualification for eligibility to be an  
367 elector or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice or procedure with  
368 respect to voting, that is different from that which was in effect at the  
369 time an action under subsection (d) of this section was commenced shall  
370 be enforced unless the court finds that such qualification, prerequisite,  
371 standard, practice or procedure does not have the purpose, and will not  
372 have the effect, of impairing the right to vote on the basis of protected  
373 class membership or in contravention of the guarantees with respect to  
374 such right that are set forth in sections 9-368j to 9-368q, inclusive, as  
375 amended by this act, provided, in any action brought pursuant to  
376 chapter 149, any remedy ordered shall be consistent with the provisions  
377 of said chapter. Notwithstanding the provisions of subparagraph (M) of  
378 this subdivision, any such finding by the court shall not be a bar to any  
379 subsequent action to enjoin enforcement of such qualification,  
380 prerequisite, standard, practice or procedure.

381 Sec. 10. Subparagraphs (E) and (F) of subdivision (2) of subsection (g)  
382 of section 9-368j of the general statutes are repealed and the following is  
383 substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and applicable to*  
384 *complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

385 (E) If, pursuant to the provisions of this subsection, a municipality  
386 enacts or implements a remedy or the Secretary of the State approves a  
387 proposed remedy, a party who sent a notification letter described in

388 subdivision (1) of this subsection regarding a potential violation that is  
389 related to such remedy may, not later than thirty days after such  
390 enactment, implementation or approval, submit a claim for  
391 reimbursement from such municipality for the costs associated with  
392 producing and sending such notification letter. Such party shall submit  
393 such claim in writing and substantiate such claim with financial  
394 documentation, including a detailed invoice for any demography  
395 services or analysis of voting patterns in such municipality. Upon  
396 receipt of any such claim, such municipality may request additional  
397 financial documentation if that which has been provided by such party  
398 is insufficient to substantiate such costs. Such municipality shall  
399 reimburse such party for reasonable costs claimed or for an amount to  
400 which such party and such municipality agree, except that the  
401 cumulative amount of any such reimbursements to all such parties other  
402 than the Secretary of the State shall not exceed fifty thousand dollars,  
403 adjusted in accordance with any change in the consumer price index for  
404 all urban consumers as published by the United States Department of  
405 Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. If any such party and such  
406 municipality fail to agree to a reimbursement amount, either such party  
407 or such municipality may file an action for a declaratory judgment with  
408 the superior court for the judicial district [in which such municipality is  
409 located] of Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport for a  
410 clarification of rights.

411 (F) (i) Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, a party  
412 described in subsection (d) of this section may seek preliminary relief  
413 for a regular election held in a municipality by filing an action pursuant  
414 to this section during the one hundred twenty days prior to such regular  
415 election. Not later than the filing of such action, such party shall send a  
416 notification letter described in subdivision (1) of this subsection to such  
417 municipality. In the event any such action is withdrawn or dismissed as  
418 being moot as a result of such municipality's enactment or  
419 implementation of a remedy, or the approval by the Secretary of the  
420 State of a proposed remedy, any such party may only submit a claim for  
421 reimbursement in accordance with the provisions of subparagraph (E)  
422 of this subdivision.

423 (ii) In the case of preliminary relief sought pursuant to subparagraph  
424 (F)(i) of this subdivision by a party described in subsection (d) of this  
425 section, the superior court for the judicial district [in which such  
426 municipality is located] of Hartford or for the judicial district of  
427 Bridgeport shall grant such relief if such court determines that (I) such  
428 party has shown a substantial likelihood of success on the merits, and  
429 (II) it is possible to implement an appropriate remedy that would  
430 resolve the violation alleged under this section prior to such election in  
431 a manner that will not unduly disrupt such election.

432 Sec. 11. Subsection (g) of section 9-368l of the general statutes is  
433 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*  
434 *2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

435 (g) Any individual aggrieved by a violation of this section, any  
436 organization whose membership includes individuals aggrieved by  
437 such a violation or the Secretary of the State may file an action alleging  
438 a violation of this section in the superior court for the judicial district [in  
439 which such violation has occurred] of Hartford or for the judicial district  
440 of Bridgeport, except that no determination of the Secretary under this  
441 section to designate a municipality or a language for the provision of  
442 assistance shall constitute a violation of this section.

443 Sec. 12. Subsection (a) of section 9-368m of the general statutes is  
444 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*  
445 *2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

446 (a) In accordance with the provisions of this section, the enactment or  
447 implementation of a covered policy, as described in subsection (b) of this  
448 section, by a covered jurisdiction, as described in subsection (c) of this  
449 section, shall be subject to preclearance, as described in subsections (e)  
450 and (f) of this section, by the Secretary of the State or the superior court  
451 for the judicial district [in which such covered jurisdiction is located] of  
452 Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport.

453 Sec. 13. Subdivision (1) of subsection (f) of section 9-368m of the  
454 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu

455 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after*  
456 *July 1, 2026*):

457 (f) (1) If a covered jurisdiction seeks preclearance from the superior  
458 court for the judicial district [in which such covered jurisdiction is  
459 located] of Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport for the  
460 adoption or implementation of any covered policy, in lieu of seeking  
461 such preclearance from the Secretary of the State pursuant to subsection  
462 (e) of this section, such covered jurisdiction shall submit, in writing,  
463 such covered policy to such court and may obtain such preclearance in  
464 accordance with the provisions of this subsection, provided (A) such  
465 covered jurisdiction shall also contemporaneously transmit to the  
466 Secretary of the State a copy of such submission, and (B) failure to so  
467 provide such copy shall result in an automatic denial of such  
468 preclearance. Notwithstanding the transmission to the Secretary of a  
469 copy of any such submission, the court shall exercise exclusive  
470 jurisdiction over such submission. The covered jurisdiction shall bear  
471 the burden of proof in the court's determination as to preclearance.

472 Sec. 14. Subsection (g) of section 9-368m of the general statutes is  
473 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*  
474 *2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026*):

475 (g) If any covered jurisdiction enacts or implements any covered  
476 policy without obtaining preclearance for such covered policy in  
477 accordance with the provisions of this section, the Secretary of the State  
478 or any party described in subsection (d) of section 9-368j, as amended  
479 by this act, may file an action in the superior court for the judicial district  
480 [in which such covered jurisdiction is located] of Hartford or for the  
481 judicial district of Bridgeport to enjoin such enactment or  
482 implementation and seek sanctions against such covered jurisdiction for  
483 violations of this section.

484 Sec. 15. Subdivision (1) of subsection (c) of section 9-368n of the  
485 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu  
486 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after*  
487 *July 1, 2026*):

488 (c) (1) Any individual aggrieved by a violation of this section or any  
 489 organization whose membership includes individuals aggrieved by  
 490 such a violation may file an action alleging a violation of this section in  
 491 the superior court for the judicial district [in which such violation has  
 492 occurred] of Hartford or for the judicial district of Bridgeport. Such an  
 493 action may be filed irrespective of any action that may be filed by the  
 494 State Elections Enforcement Commission, the Attorney General or the  
 495 State's Attorney as a result of such a violation.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-324
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-325
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-328
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-329a
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-329b
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368j(b)(2)(B)
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368j(c)(1)

Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368j(d)
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368j(e)(1)
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368j(g)(2)(E) and (F)
Sec. 11	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368l(g)
Sec. 12	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368m(a)
Sec. 13	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368m(f)(1)
Sec. 14	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368m(g)
Sec. 15	<i>July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints brought on or after July 1, 2026</i>	9-368n(c)(1)

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

In Section 3(c), references to "the court" were changed to references to "such superior court" and "[under him] thereunder" was changed to "under [him] such party", 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.*

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**OFA Fiscal Note****State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None**Explanation**

The bill, which requires certain election-related cases to be handled by the superior courts for the judicial districts of Hartford or Bridgeport, is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact to the state, as the affected state agencies can meet these requirements within existing resources.

**The Out Years****State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None

**OLR Bill Analysis****sHB 5344****AN ACT CONCERNING SUPERIOR COURT VENUE FOR ELECTION CASES.****SUMMARY**

This bill requires certain election-related complaints, orders, and determinations to be brought in or made by the Superior Courts for the judicial districts of Hartford or Bridgeport, including actions under the state's voting rights act (VRA, see BACKGROUND). Current law allows any Superior Court with jurisdiction to hear these complaints or conduct these actions.

Under the bill, the following complaints, orders, and determinations are subject to this change in jurisdiction:

1. complaints about elections for statewide offices and probate judges (§§ 1 & 2);
2. complaints about elections for municipal offices or primaries for justices of the peace (§ 3);
3. complaints about the presidential preference primary; primaries for state, district, or municipal office; town committee primaries; or a primary pursuant to a special act (§ 4);
4. orders for removing a candidate's name that is improperly on a ballot in those primaries or any election (§ 5); and
5. actions brought under the state VRA, including complaints and determinations about voting discrimination (§§ 6-8 & 10); ordering remedies under the state VRA (§ 9); language assistance violations (§ 11); violations of preclearance requirements (§ 14; see below); and claims of intimidation, deception, or obstructing

the right to vote (§ 15).

Current law also requires certain jurisdictions to get preclearance from the secretary of the state or the Superior Court where the municipality is located before enacting or implementing certain election policies or requirements. The bill instead requires these jurisdictions to receive preclearance from either the secretary or the Hartford or Bridgeport Superior Courts (§§ 12 & 13).

It also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints filed on or after this date.

**BACKGROUND**

***State Voting Rights Act***

In 2023, the state adopted legislation that generally codified several aspects of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 into state law. Broadly, the state’s law prohibits municipalities from (1) employing election methods in municipal elections that dilute the vote of protected class members or (2) imposing certain practices or policies in a way that impairs protected class members’ right to vote. It also authorizes the secretary of the state and certain aggrieved parties to file a civil action after following certain procedures.

Additionally, it generally prohibits engaging in intimidating, deceptive, or obstructive acts that affect the right to vote, requires certain municipalities to provide language-related assistance in voting and elections, and generally allows the secretary and certain aggrieved parties to file court actions alleging violations.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 13    Nay 6    (03/11/2026)