



# Acts Affecting Town Clerks and Elections

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## Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts and special acts) significantly affecting town clerks and elections enacted during the 2022 legislative session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Municipalities, are, or will soon be, available on OLR's website: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/actsaffecting.asp>.

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) or special act (SA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on OLR's website: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/olrsums.asp>.

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or General Assembly's website: <http://www.cga.ct.gov>.

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## **Elections**

### ***Absentee Voting***

This year, the legislature expanded two of the six statutory reasons for which qualified voters (i.e., electors and people eligible to vote in a referendum) may vote by absentee ballot. Under the expanded law, qualified voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at their polling place because of (1) sickness, rather than because of their own illness, or (2) physical disability, rather than because of their own physical disability.

Additionally, the new legislation authorizes qualified voters to vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at their polling place because of absence from the town of their voting residence. Prior law authorized voters to vote absentee for this reason only if they were absent during all voting hours ([PA 22-2](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Replacement of Candidates on the Ballot***

The General Assembly moved up the deadline for replacing candidates who qualify to appear on an election ballot but later withdraw or are disqualified. Previously, candidates could be replaced if they withdrew or were disqualified at least 24 days before an election; the political party had to certify the replacement to the secretary of the state at least 21 days before the election. The new law, moves these up these deadlines to (1) 46 days before an election for the withdrawal or disqualification and (2) 42 days beforehand for the party's certification of the replacement. The legislature retained the existing deadlines for candidates who die before the election (i.e., a candidate may be replaced if he or she dies at least 24 hours before the polls open) ([PA 22-127](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Time Off to Vote***

A new law requires employers, under certain conditions, to grant employees time off to vote in probate special elections (held prior to July 1, 2024), as already authorized for other specified elections. Upon the employee's request, employers must grant two hours of unpaid time off from the employee's regularly scheduled work. As provided for other special elections, this requirement applies only to employees who are eligible as an elector ([PA 22-129](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2022).

## **Freedom of Information**

### ***Protected Disclosure of Voter Registration Information***

In 2021, the legislature prohibited the disclosure of certain voter registration information, including (1) any motor vehicle operator's license number or identity card number, (2) Social Security

number, or (3) a person's voter registration number or an identifier added to a voter registration record for compliance with the requirements of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). This year, the legislature removed a person's voter registration number and any other HAVA-required identifiers from the list of protected information ([PA 22-13](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Remote Meetings***

This session, the legislature made a 2021 law permanent, passed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, that allows agencies to meet the Freedom of Information Act's open meeting requirements through electronic equipment (e.g., by telephone, video, or other conferencing platforms) or electronic equipment combined with an in-person meeting (i.e., hybrid meetings). In doing so, it also explicitly authorized regional school districts to present a proposed budget via remote or hybrid meetings, similar to other public agencies ([PA 22-3](#), effective upon passage).

## **Licenses, Records, and Filings**

### ***Dog Licenses for Service Animals and Therapy Animals***

A new law broadens the circumstances under which town clerks must provide a free license and dog tag to a person with a disability. It requires town clerks to provide a person with a disability (i.e., an intellectual, physical, mental, or learning disability) a free license and tag for his or her dog that is a trained service animal, service animal in-training, or therapy animal enrolled in the Department of Children and Families Animal Assistance Intervention Program. It also allows clerks, under certain conditions, to issue a free license or tag without obtaining written evidence of the dog's training and education ([PA 22-54](#), § 5, effective June 1, 2023).

### ***Local Option Property Tax Exemption for Veterans***

The legislature established a new option for municipalities to authorize property tax exemptions for income-qualifying veterans' primary residences. Under the new law, the exemption, if approved by the municipality, is (1) available to veterans with up to \$50,100 in federal adjusted gross income and (2) equals 10% of the assessed value of a dwelling a veteran owns and uses as a primary residence.

The veteran requesting the exemption must provide the town clerk with (1) notice that he or she is eligible for the exemption and (2) either a certified copy of the veteran's discharge records or two affidavits affirming the veteran's military service. No fee may be assessed for this service. The municipality's assessor must annually compile a certified list of those eligible for the exemption and file the list with the town clerk ([PA 22-34](#), § 33, effective October 1, 2022).

## ***Online Payments for Vital Records***

A new law specifies that if a registrar of vital statistics allows online payments for vital records (i.e., original, short-, and long-form birth certificates, marriage certificates, and death certificates), the public health commissioner or her designee must approve (1) the website for collecting payments and (2) the registrar's associated requirements. Typically, the town clerk serves as the registrar of vital statistics ([PA 22-58](#), §§ 31 & 32, effective upon passage).

## **Working Groups**

### ***Dog Licensing Working Group***

Under a new law, the agriculture commissioner must convene a working group with the Connecticut Town Clerks Association to develop a plan for a statewide online dog licensing portal. The working group must (1) include Department of Agriculture representatives, association members, a Connecticut Conference of Municipalities representative, a Council of Small Towns representative, and other people as necessary and (2) submit the plan and related legislative proposals to the Environment Committee by January 1, 2023 ([PA 22-54](#), § 6, effective upon passage).

### ***State Building Code Records Working Group***

This year, the legislature directed the administrative services commissioner to convene a working group to develop a standardized system for digitizing records relating to the State Building Code and creating a searchable web-based public database including those records. The group must (1) include at least one member from the Connecticut Town Clerks Association and (2) submit its findings and legislative recommendations to the Planning and Development Committee by January 1, 2023 ([SA 22-14](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

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