



2023 Acts Affecting Town Clerks & Elections

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Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts and one special act) and one resolution significantly affecting town clerks and elections enacted during the 2023 regular session and the September 26 Special 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), special act (SA), or resolution act (RA) 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>.

Table of Contents

Campaign Finance	4
CEF Funding	4
Contributions to State Central Committees	4
Expenditures by Leadership and Caucus Committees.....	4
Gubernatorial CEP Grants	4
Qualifying Contributions for CEP Legislative Candidates in the 2024 Election.....	5
Elections	5
Absentee Voting	5
Attorney General Qualifications	5
Early Voting.....	5
Minority Representation	6
Presidential Primary.....	6
State Voting Rights Act	6
Election Administration.....	7
Drop Boxes	7
Filing of Nominating Petitions	7
Recanvasses	7
Recanvass Training.....	7
Regional Election Advisors	7
Terms of Elected Municipal Officials	8
Voting Tabulators	8
Licenses, Records, and Filings.....	8
Fetal Death Certificates.....	8
Local Kennels.....	8
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Investigations	9
Remote Notarization	9
Task Forces	9
Election Administration Staffing.....	9
Online Municipal Land Records and Maps	9

Campaign Finance

CEF Funding

Beginning in FY 26, in any fiscal year before the fiscal year of a gubernatorial election, new legislation requires that the amount of unclaimed property funds deposited into the Citizens' Election Fund (CEF) be the amount deemed necessary by the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) to pay grants to candidates participating in the Citizens' Election Program (CEP), the state's voluntary public campaign financing system available to legislative and statewide office candidates. Under prior law, each year's deposit equaled the amount deposited the previous year, adjusted for inflation.

The new legislation also eliminates a provision in prior law requiring that transfers from the unclaimed property fund to the CEF be reduced in the subsequent fiscal year by the amount of any corporation business tax revenue deposited in the CEF. This tax revenue is deposited in the fund when there is a shortfall ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 186-188, effective July 1, 2025).

Contributions to State Central Committees

A new law increases the annual limit on contributions by an individual to a party's state central committee from \$10,000 to \$15,000 ([PA 23-205](#), § 190, effective upon passage).

Expenditures by Leadership and Caucus Committees

A new law makes several changes concerning certain expenditures made by legislative leadership and caucus committees under state campaign finance laws. It allows leadership and caucus committees of the same party in the same legislative chamber to aggregate their maximum organization expenditure amounts for legislative candidates participating in the CEP. It also modifies the types of events and services for which organization expenditures may be made.

Additionally, the new law allows legislative leadership and caucus committees to pay or reimburse other leadership or caucus committees for the pro rata share of expenses of paying or reimbursing the other committee's lawful purposes ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 171-178, effective upon passage).

Gubernatorial CEP Grants

This year the legislature increased grant amounts for gubernatorial candidates participating in the CEP. Beginning with the 2026 election, it increased the base amount of the CEP primary and general election grants for gubernatorial candidates to \$3,227,500 for a primary and \$15,492,000 for a general election. As under existing law, these amounts must be adjusted for inflation.

The legislature also allowed participating gubernatorial candidates from a major party to apply for and receive a “convention campaign grant” before the party’s nominating convention, equal to one-fourth of the primary grant. It set the grant amount at \$806,875 and similarly required adjusting it for inflation. Previously, CEP grants were available only after a party’s nominating convention ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 179-185, effective October 1, 2023).

Qualifying Contributions for CEP Legislative Candidates in the 2024 Election

For the 2024 election only, new legislation freezes, at 2022 levels, the aggregate amount of qualifying contributions (QCs) that legislative candidates must raise to be eligible for a CEP grant (i.e., \$17,300 for state senator and \$5,800 for state representative). The legislation retains the requirement that SEEC adjust the maximum individual QC amount (which was \$290 in 2022) before the 2024 election ([PA 23-205](#), § 189, effective October 1, 2023).

Elections

Absentee Voting

This year, the General Assembly passed a resolution that proposes amending the state constitution by removing its current restrictions on absentee voting. Under these restrictions, the legislature may pass a law allowing electors to cast their vote by absentee ballot if an elector is unable to appear at their polling place because of absence from the town where they reside, sickness or physical disability, or religious tenets that prohibit secular activity on election day (Article VI, § 7).

The resolution passed by a majority of each house of the General Assembly in 2021 and 2023 and will appear on the November 5, 2024, general election ballot ([RA 23-1](#)).

Attorney General Qualifications

A new law changes the statutory qualifications for serving as state attorney general. Specifically, the act requires that a candidate have engaged in the practice of law in the state for at least 10 years (either consecutive or nonconsecutive) instead of requiring that a candidate have at least 10 years of active practice at the bar of the state (i.e., experience that includes litigation) ([PA 23-204](#), § 202, effective upon passage).

Early Voting

In the November 2022 general election, voters approved a constitutional amendment allowing the General Assembly to pass legislation establishing in-person, early voting. This session, the legislature passed legislation establishing, beginning for elections on or after April 1, 2024, the

following early voting periods: (1) a 14-day early voting period for general elections, (2) seven days for most primaries, and (3) four days for special elections and the presidential preference primary. The new legislation also implements policies for establishing early voting locations and staffing and operating them.

In addition, the new law expands the election-day registration process to include the early voting period and generally allows voter registration during this window. The General Assembly also modified several existing election administration provisions and deadlines to accommodate early voting implementation ([PA 23-5](#), as amended by [PA 23-204](#), §§ 176-183, 420 & 453, various effective dates).

Minority Representation

The state's minority representation law limits the maximum number of members who may belong to the same political party on governmental bodies of the state, municipalities, and other political subdivisions. A new law clarifies that, for minority representation, an unaffiliated person (1) must be considered unaffiliated for the entire duration of his or her elected term and (2) elected as a candidate for a political party is deemed a member of that party even if he or she is not registered with that party ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 164-165, effective upon passage).

Presidential Primary

The General Assembly adopted new legislation moving the date of the state's presidential preference primary from the last Tuesday in April to the first Tuesday in April (e.g., from April 30, 2024, to April 2, 2024) ([PA 23-1](#) (SSS), § 2, effective October 1, 2023).

State Voting Rights Act

This year, the legislature enacted a state voting rights act. Among other things, the act (1) prohibits election methods that impair a protected class member's right to vote, (2) authorizes the secretary of the state and others to file a court action over violations, and (3) authorizes the court to impose tailored remedies for violating the act and award attorney's fees to plaintiffs who prevail in a court action. Additionally, the act creates a statewide election database to track election-related data and evaluate compliance with existing law and the act's provisions.

The act also establishes (1) requirements for municipalities to provide language assistance for limited English proficient individuals and (2) a preclearance process to require that certain jurisdictions get approval for certain election-related policies. It prohibits intimidation, deception, or obstruction related to voting and allows aggrieved parties to seek remedies in court ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 410-418, most provisions effective July 1, 2023).

Election Administration

Drop Boxes

A new law authorizes town clerks to collect the ballots from drop boxes starting on the first day of the absentee ballot period for, instead of 29 days before, an election, primary, or referendum ([PA 23-158](#), effective October 1, 2023).

Filing of Nominating Petitions

This year, the legislature advanced the deadline by seven days for filing nominating petitions with the secretary of the state for candidates seeking to petition onto an election ballot. Under the new law, the deadline is now 4:00 p.m. on the (1) 97th day before a regular election or (2) 77th day before a special election, with certain exceptions. The new law does not impact the deadline for filing these petitions with the town clerks ([PA 23-178](#), effective upon passage).

Recanvasses

A new law makes various changes to recanvassing laws. It primarily authorizes moderators to remove individuals, either temporarily or permanently, who interfere with the recanvass (e.g., attempts to communicate with recanvass officials other than the moderator). It also authorizes party representatives attending the recanvassing to view each ballot to discern its markings as it is being recanvassed ([PA 23-1](#) (SSS), § 5, effective October 1, 2023).

Recanvass Training

In 2023, the legislature required the secretary of the state to develop an instructional training video on recanvass procedures and distribute it to recanvass officials whenever a recanvass is required. The recanvass officials must view the video immediately before starting the recanvass ([PA 23-1](#) (SSS), § 4, effective January 1, 2024).

Regional Election Advisors

A new law makes several changes to the regional election monitor (REM) program including: (1) replacing REMs acting on the secretary of the state's behalf with regional election advisors (REAs) acting on behalf of the regional councils of government (COGs) that appoint them; (2) allowing COGs to appoint REAs rather than requiring them to contract with REMs; (3) changing the program's contracting and memorandum of understanding requirements between COGs and the secretary of the state; (4) applying certain REM training and instruction requirements to REAs; and (5) providing state funding for the REA program ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 166-169, effective July 1, 2023).

Terms of Elected Municipal Officials

A new law extends municipal elected officials' terms to conform to the beginning of the succeeding term when an election date change would otherwise cause the term to expire before the next regular election. Under prior law, terms that were set to expire before the next regular election because of an election date change were extended to the date of that election. Existing law allows conforming extensions or reductions to an incumbent's term if the beginning of a term is shifted (e.g., due to a change in law) ([CGS § 9-187a](#)) ([PA 23-1](#), September Special Session (SSS), § 1, effective October 1, 2023).

Voting Tabulators

During the 2023 September Special Session, the legislature required registrars of voters to ensure that each voting district uses at least one dedicated voting tabulator that only registers and counts votes for that district. This requirement does not apply to tabulators at central counting locations or those used in recanvassing. As under existing law, the secretary of the state must approve the number of voting tabulators the town provides for elections ([PA 23-1](#) (SSS), § 3, effective July 1, 2025).

Licenses, Records, and Filings

Fetal Death Certificates

A new law establishes a statutory definition of "fetal death" for the purposes of issuing fetal death certificates. By law, a fetal death certificate must be completed for each fetal death occurring after at least 20 weeks of pregnancy (i.e., stillbirth). The certificate must be signed by specified health professionals and filed with the vital statistics registrar in the municipality where the death occurred. The act exempts a father or mother from the filing requirement when the birth occurs outside of an institution (e.g., a home birth) and a physician or midwife does not attend ([PA 23-31](#), § 21, effective October 1, 2023).

Local Kennels

A new law renames a kennel license as a "local kennel license" and requires this license when a person breeds more than five, instead of more than two, litters of dogs annually. (A person applies to the town clerk for this license.) The new law disqualifies anyone guilty of animal cruelty from holding a local kennel license. It also directs how municipalities may spend the local kennel license fees they collect, allows municipal and regional animal control officers to inspect kennels annually, and generally reduces penalties related to violating kennel requirements ([PA 23-17](#), § 3, as amended by [PA 23-187](#), § 28, effective upon passage).

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Investigations

A new law eliminates a requirement that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner send fingerprints and a photograph of a decedent's body it investigates and cannot identify to the local vital statistics registrar and the Department of Public Health. It maintains the requirement that the office send the decedent's fingerprints to the State Police, conforming to current practice ([PA 23-31](#), § 25, effective October 1, 2023).

Remote Notarization

A new law allows a notary public, under specified conditions, to notarize a document for a person who is not in the notary's physical presence. It also allows a notary to refuse to perform remote notarization, excludes certain records from eligibility for remote notarization, and creates penalties for notaries who use the remote process to acknowledge ineligible documents. Additionally, the act (1) allows out-of-state and international remote notarization using a Connecticut notary for certain records and (2) authorizes the secretary of the state to adopt regulations for the remote notarization process ([PA 23-28](#), effective October 1, 2023).

Task Forces

Election Administration Staffing

A new act establishes a 17-member task force to study election administration staffing. Study topics include (1) regionalizing election administration, including tasks that COGs may perform; (2) municipal election official training; and (3) voluntary initiatives to facilitate effective election administration. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Government Administration and Elections and Planning and Development committees by January 1, 2024 ([PA 23-205](#), § 170, effective upon passage).

Online Municipal Land Records and Maps

This session, the General Assembly established a 14-member task force (including three town clerks) to study the online recording, indexing, and searching of municipal land records and maps, including creating a publicly accessible online database. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Planning and Development Committee by February 1, 2024 ([SA 23-9](#), effective from passage).

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