



# Senate

General Assembly

**File No. 500**

February Session, 2026

Substitute Senate Bill No. 459

*Senate, April 8, 2026*

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

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE CIRCULATION OF PRIMARY AND NOMINATING PETITIONS AND DISTRIBUTION OF ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS.***

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

1 Section 1. Subsection (d) of section 9-404b of the general statutes is  
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*  
3 *passage*):

4 (d) Each circulator of a primary petition page shall be an enrolled  
5 party member of a municipality in this state. Each petition page shall  
6 contain a statement signed by the registrar of the municipality in which  
7 the circulator is an enrolled party member attesting that the circulator is  
8 an enrolled party member in the municipality. Unless such a statement  
9 by the registrar of voters appears on each page so submitted, the  
10 Secretary shall reject the page. Each separate page of the petition shall  
11 contain a statement as to the authenticity of the signatures on the page

12 and the number of such signatures, and shall be signed under the  
13 penalties of false statement by the person who circulated the page,  
14 setting forth the circulator's address and the town in which the  
15 circulator is an enrolled party member and attesting that each person  
16 whose name appears on the page signed the petition in person in the  
17 presence of the circulator, that the circulator either knows each such  
18 signer or that the signer satisfactorily identified himself or herself to the  
19 circulator and that the spaces for candidates supported, offices sought  
20 and the political party involved were filled in prior to the obtaining of  
21 the signatures. Each separate page of the petition shall also be  
22 acknowledged before an appropriate person as provided in section 1-  
23 29. The Secretary shall reject any page of a petition filed with the  
24 Secretary which does not contain such a statement by the circulator as  
25 to the authenticity of the signatures on the page, or upon which the  
26 statement of the circulator is incomplete in any respect, or which does  
27 not contain the certification required under this section by the registrar  
28 of the town in which the circulator is an enrolled party member. No  
29 person who has been convicted of a crime under this title shall circulate  
30 any page of a primary petition during such person's period of probation  
31 or parole, and for a period of twelve years after such person's release  
32 from confinement, probation or parole, and the Secretary shall reject for  
33 filing any such page that was circulated in violation of such prohibition.  
34 For the purpose of complying with such rejection requirement, the  
35 Secretary shall order the performance of a nation-wide criminal  
36 background check on each circulator of one or more primary petition  
37 pages. Any individual proposed as a candidate in any primary petition  
38 may serve as a circulator of the pages of the petition, provided the  
39 individual's service as circulator does not violate any provision of this  
40 section.

41 Sec. 2. Subsection (c) of section 9-410 of the general statutes is  
42 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*  
43 *passage*):

44 (c) Each circulator of a primary petition page shall be an enrolled  
45 party member of a municipality in this state who is entitled to vote. Each

46 petition page shall contain a statement signed by the registrar of the  
47 municipality in which such circulator is an enrolled party member  
48 attesting that the circulator is an enrolled party member in such  
49 municipality. Unless such a statement by the registrar appears on each  
50 page so submitted, the registrar shall reject such page. No candidate for  
51 the nomination of a party for a municipal office or the position of town  
52 committee member shall circulate any petition for another candidate or  
53 another group of candidates contained in one primary petition for the  
54 nomination of such party for the same office or position, and any  
55 petition page circulated in violation of this provision shall be rejected by  
56 the registrar. No person shall circulate petitions for more than the  
57 maximum number of candidates to be nominated by a party for the  
58 same office or position, and any petition page circulated in violation of  
59 this provision shall be rejected by the registrar. Each separate sheet of  
60 such petition shall contain a statement as to the authenticity of the  
61 signatures thereon and the number of such signatures, and shall be  
62 signed under the penalties of false statement by the person who  
63 circulated the same, setting forth such circulator's address and the town  
64 in which such circulator is an enrolled party member and attesting that  
65 each person whose name appears on such sheet signed the same in  
66 person in the presence of such circulator, that the circulator either knows  
67 each such signer or that the signer satisfactorily identified the signer to  
68 the circulator and that the spaces for candidates supported, offices or  
69 positions sought and the political party involved were filled in prior to  
70 the obtaining of the signatures. Each separate sheet of such petition shall  
71 also be acknowledged before an appropriate person as provided in  
72 section 1-29. Any sheet of a petition filed with the registrar which does  
73 not contain such a statement by the circulator as to the authenticity of  
74 the signatures thereon, or upon which the statement of the circulator is  
75 incomplete in any respect, or which does not contain the certification  
76 hereinbefore required by the registrar of the town in which the  
77 circulator is an enrolled party member, shall be rejected by the registrar.  
78 No person who has been convicted of a crime under this title shall  
79 circulate any page of a primary petition during such person's period of  
80 probation or parole, and for a period of twelve years after such person's

81 release from confinement, probation or parole, and the registrar shall  
82 reject for filing any such page that was circulated in violation of such  
83 prohibition. For the purpose of complying with such rejection  
84 requirement, the registrar shall order the performance of a nation-wide  
85 criminal background check on each circulator of one or more primary  
86 petition pages. Any individual proposed as a candidate in any primary  
87 petition may serve as a circulator of the pages of such petition, provided  
88 such individual's service as circulator does not violate any provision of  
89 this section.

90 Sec. 3. Section 9-453e of the general statutes is repealed and the  
91 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

92 (a) Each circulator of a nominating petition page shall be a United  
93 States citizen, at least eighteen years of age and a resident of a town in  
94 this state and shall not be on parole for conviction of a felony. Any  
95 individual proposed as a candidate in any nominating petition may  
96 serve as circulator of the pages of such nominating petition.

97 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section,  
98 no person who has been convicted of a crime under this title shall  
99 circulate any page of a nominating petition during such person's period  
100 of probation or parole, and for a period of twelve years after such  
101 person's release from confinement, probation or parole. The appropriate  
102 town clerk or the Secretary of the State, as applicable under section 9-  
103 453i, shall reject for filing any such page that was circulated in violation  
104 of such prohibition. For the purpose of complying with such rejection  
105 requirement, the appropriate town clerk or the Secretary, as applicable,  
106 shall order the performance of a nation-wide criminal background  
107 check on each circulator of one or more nominating petition pages.

108 Sec. 4. Section 9-453j of the general statutes is repealed and the  
109 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

110 Each page of a nominating petition submitted to the town clerk or the  
111 Secretary of the State and filed with the Secretary of the State under the  
112 provisions of sections 9-453a to 9-453s, inclusive, or section 9-216 shall

113 contain a statement as to the residency in this state and eligibility of the  
114 circulator and authenticity of the signatures thereon, signed under  
115 penalties of false statement, by the person who circulated the same. Such  
116 statement shall set forth (1) such circulator's residence address,  
117 including the town in this state in which such circulator is a resident, (2)  
118 the circulator's date of birth and that the circulator is at least eighteen  
119 years of age, (3) that the circulator is a United States citizen and [not]  
120 neither (A) on parole for conviction of a felony, nor (B) on probation or  
121 parole for conviction of a crime under this title or within the period that  
122 is twelve years after release from confinement, probation or parole due  
123 to conviction of a crime under this title, and (4) that each person whose  
124 name appears on such page signed the same in person in the presence  
125 of such circulator and that either the circulator knows each such signer  
126 or that the signer satisfactorily identified himself to the circulator. Any  
127 false statement committed with respect to such statement shall be  
128 deemed to have been committed in the town in which the petition was  
129 circulated.

130 Sec. 5. Subsections (j) to (o), inclusive, of section 9-140 of the 2026  
131 supplement to the general statutes are repealed and the following is  
132 substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

133 (j) No person shall pay or give any compensation to another, and no  
134 person shall accept any compensation, solely for (1) [distributing  
135 absentee ballot applications obtained from a municipal clerk or the  
136 Secretary of the State or (2)] obtaining an absentee ballot application  
137 from a municipal clerk, as the designee of an absentee ballot applicant,  
138 (2) obtaining fewer than five absentee ballot applications for the purpose  
139 of distributing such applications to members of such person's  
140 immediate family, pursuant to subparagraph (C) of subdivision (1) of  
141 subsection (k) of this section, or (3) assisting any other person in the  
142 execution of an absentee ballot application.

143 (k) (1) [A person shall register with the municipal clerk before  
144 distributing five or more absentee ballot applications for an election,  
145 primary or referendum, not including applications distributed to such

146 person's immediate family. Such requirement shall not apply to] No  
147 person shall receive any absentee ballot application for the purpose of  
148 distributing such application to another person, except for (A) a person  
149 who is the designee of an applicant, [or to] (B) any employee of the  
150 Department of Correction who provides the application for absentee  
151 ballot form prescribed under subsection (c) of section 9-139a to one or  
152 more incarcerated absentee ballot applicants, and (C) a person who  
153 receives fewer than five absentee ballot applications for the purpose of  
154 distributing such applications to members of such person's immediate  
155 family.

156 (2) The municipal clerk shall reject the application of any absentee  
157 ballot applicant made upon the form prescribed under subsection (c) of  
158 section 9-139a if such form indicates any address other than an address  
159 at a Department of Correction facility. The municipal clerk shall  
160 maintain a log of all applications of incarcerated absentee ballot  
161 applicants received by such municipal clerk, which log shall indicate the  
162 name and address of each applicant, the date of receipt of each  
163 application and the date such municipal clerk mailed the absentee ballot  
164 to such applicant or the reason why such application was rejected.

165 [(3) Any person who distributes absentee ballot applications shall  
166 maintain a list of the names and addresses of prospective absentee ballot  
167 applicants who receive such applications, and shall file such list with  
168 the municipal clerk prior to the date of the primary, election or  
169 referendum for which the applications were so distributed, except that  
170 such requirements shall not apply to any employee of the Department  
171 of Correction who provides the application for absentee ballot form  
172 prescribed under subsection (c) of section 9-139a to incarcerated  
173 absentee ballot applicants. Any person who distributes absentee ballot  
174 applications and receives an executed application shall forthwith file the  
175 application with the municipal clerk.]

176 (l) No candidate, party or political committee, or agent of such  
177 candidate or committee, shall mail unsolicited applications for absentee  
178 ballots to any person, [ unless such mailing includes: (1) A written

179 explanation of the eligibility requirements for voting by absentee ballot  
 180 as prescribed in subsection (a) of section 9-135, and (2) a written warning  
 181 that voting or attempting to vote by absentee ballot without meeting one  
 182 or more of such eligibility requirements subjects the elector or applicant  
 183 to potential civil and criminal penalties.] As used in this subsection,  
 184 "agent" means any person authorized to act on behalf of another person.

185 (m) The Secretary of the State shall conspicuously post on the  
 186 Secretary of the State's web site, adjacent to the absentee ballot  
 187 application form available for downloading, a notice that the  
 188 application may be downloaded by a person only for (1) the person's  
 189 own use, (2) the use of a member of the person's immediate family, or  
 190 (3) the use of a designee of the applicant. The notice shall also contain  
 191 an advisory statement concerning the requirements of subsection (k) of  
 192 this section.

193 (n) The State Elections Enforcement Commission, in consultation  
 194 with the Secretary of the State, shall prepare a summary of the  
 195 requirements and prohibitions of the absentee voting laws, which shall  
 196 be posted on said agencies' web sites. Candidates and political party  
 197 chairpersons shall provide such summary to campaign and party  
 198 employees and volunteers.

199 (o) As used in this section, (1) "immediate family" has the same  
 200 meaning as provided in subsection (a) of section 9-140b, and (2)  
 201 "designee" has the same meaning as provided in subsection (b) of  
 202 section 9-140b.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	9-404b(d)
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	9-410(c)
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	9-453e
Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	9-453j
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	9-140(j) to (o)

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

In Section 4(3)(B), "within twelve years of release" was changed to "within the period that is twelve years after release" and "due to such a conviction under this subparagraph" was changed to "due to conviction of a crime under this title", for clarity and consistency.

**GAE**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Secretary of the State	GF - Cost	See Below	See Below

Note: GF=General Fund

**Municipal Impact:**

Municipalities	Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Various Municipalities	STATE MANDATE <sup>1</sup> - Cost	See Below	See Below

**Explanation**

The bill (1) prohibits certain individuals from circulating nominating petitions and requires a background check for circulators, (2) limits the distribution of absentee ballots for others, and (3) prohibits the mailing of unsolicited absentee ballots. The bill's background check requirement results in a cost to the Secretary of the State (SOTS) and various municipalities beginning in FY 27.

The bill requires that SOTS, a municipal registrar of voters, or a town clerk order a background check for each circulator. Different officials must order the background check for circulators depending on the type of election for which the circulator is petitioning, although one portion of the bill (Section 3) indicates that either the town clerk or SOTS must order the background check for any circulator. The exact cost of the

<sup>1</sup> State mandate is defined in Sec. 2-32b(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, "state mandate" means any state initiated constitutional, statutory or executive action that requires a local government to establish, expand or modify its activities in such a way as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenues.

background checks will depend on the number of applicable circulators. A basic national background check is estimated to cost \$20 to \$100 per report, depending on the depth of the search.

***The Out Years***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future, subject to inflation, and the number of circulators subject to a background check under the bill's provisions.

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**OLR Bill Analysis****sSB 459*****AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE CIRCULATION OF PRIMARY AND NOMINATING PETITIONS AND DISTRIBUTION OF ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS.*****SUMMARY**

This bill prohibits people from (1) circulating certain election petitions for a specified period if they have been convicted of an election crime and (2) requesting or distributing absentee ballot applications for others, with certain exceptions.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

**§§ 1-4 — PETITION PROHIBITION**

The petition prohibition lasts (1) while the person is on probation or parole and (2) for 12 years after a person's release from confinement, probation, or parole. The secretary of the state, registrar of voters, or town clerk, as applicable, must (1) order a nationwide criminal background check on each circulator and (2) reject any petition page filed by an ineligible person under these provisions.

An ineligible person may not circulate (1) nominating petitions on behalf of petitioning candidates seeking congressional, statewide, legislative, or municipal office, or the office of presidential elector, at a regular or special election or (2) primary petitions on behalf of major party candidates for congressional, statewide, legislative, or municipal office. For nominating petitions, the bill adds a related stipulation to the statement that the circulator must sign on each petition page.

**§ 5 — ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION PROHIBITION**

The bill generally prohibits any person from requesting or distributing absentee ballot applications for others unless (1) acting as a

voter's designee (see BACKGROUND); (2) by a Department of Correction employee on an incarcerated voter's behalf as allowed by law; or (3) requesting less than five applications for use by the person's immediate family (spouse, child, parent, or sibling, or any dependent relative residing in the person's home).

Additionally, current law prohibits a person from paying or receiving compensation solely to distribute absentee ballot applications. The bill instead prohibits paying or receiving compensation solely to obtain applications (1) by designees or (2) on behalf of a person's immediate family.

Correspondingly, the bill eliminates provisions generally requiring individuals to (1) register with the town clerk if distributing five or more applications for a specific election contest and (2) keep a log of who received applications they distributed and file it with the town clerk.

Similarly, the bill also prohibits candidates, parties, and political committees (and agents of candidates or committees) from mailing unsolicited absentee ballot applications to any person. Under current law, they may do so if they include a written (1) explanation of the eligibility requirements and (2) warning concerning the penalties for violating these requirements.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Voters' Designees***

By law, a designee must be (1) a person caring for the applicant because of the applicant's illness or physical disability (for example, a licensed physician or a registered or practical nurse); (2) the applicant's family member; or (3) a police officer, registrar of voters, or deputy or assistant registrar of voters in the municipality where the applicant resides (CGS § 9-140b).

### ***Related Bills***

sHB 5001, reported favorably by the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee, generally amends the state's absentee balloting laws, including changes concerning absentee ballot

distribution by third parties.

sSB 491, reported favorably the GAE committee, contains substantially similar absentee balloting provisions as sHB 5001.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/23/2026)