



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 581

February Session, 2026

Substitute Senate Bill No. 491

Senate, April 9, 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 FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NO-EXCUSE
ABSENTEE VOTING.**

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

1 Section 1. Section 9-135 of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

3 [(a)] Any elector eligible to vote at a primary or an election and any
4 person eligible to vote at a referendum may vote by absentee ballot, [if
5 such elector or person is unable to appear at such elector's or person's
6 polling place on the day of such primary, election or referendum for any
7 of the following reasons: (1) Such elector's or person's active service with
8 the armed forces of the United States; (2) such elector's or person's
9 absence from the town of such elector's or person's voting residence; (3)
10 sickness; (4) physical disability; (5) the tenets of such elector's or person's
11 religion forbid secular activity on the day of such primary, election or
12 referendum; or (6) the required performance of such elector's or person's

13 duties as a primary, election or referendum official, including as a town
 14 clerk or registrar of voters or as staff of the clerk or registrar, at a polling
 15 place other than such elector's or person's own during all of the hours
 16 of voting at such primary, election or referendum] provided such elector
 17 properly completes and submits an absentee ballot application in
 18 accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

19 [(b) No person shall misrepresent the eligibility requirements for
 20 voting by absentee ballot prescribed in subsection (a) of this section, to
 21 any elector or prospective absentee ballot applicant.]

22 Sec. 2. Section 9-137 of the general statutes is repealed and the
 23 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

24 (a) Each absentee ballot shall be returned to the municipal clerk,
 25 inserted in [an inner] a return envelope which shall be capable of being
 26 sealed and which shall have printed on its face a form containing the
 27 following [statements] statement:

28 "I hereby state under the penalties of false statement in absentee
 29 balloting that I am eligible to vote at the primary, election or referendum
 30 in the municipality in which this absentee ballot is to be cast, [and that I
 31 expect to be unable to appear at my polling place on the day of such
 32 primary, election or referendum for one or more of the following
 33 reasons: (1) My active service in the armed forces; (2) my absence from
 34 the town in which I am eligible to vote; (3) sickness; (4) physical
 35 disability; (5) the tenets of my religion which forbid secular activity on
 36 the day of such primary, election or referendum; or (6) my duties as a
 37 primary, election or referendum official.]

38 Date
 39 (Signature)
 40 (Printed name)"

41 (b) Each such return envelope shall also be endorsed on the outside
 42 with the words "OFFICIAL ABSENTEE BALLOT" and bear a label

43 generated by the state-wide centralized voter registration system
44 described in section 9-50b. Such label shall include (1) (A) the name and
45 return address of the sender, (B) the applicant's name and voting
46 residence by street and number, (C) the applicant's voting district, (D)
47 the ballot style, (E) the unique ballot identification number, appearing
48 both in a text format and as a scannable barcode, and (F) the date of the
49 primary, election or referendum at which the ballot is to be cast and, if
50 the absentee ballot is to be cast at a primary, the name of the party
51 holding the primary, and (2) a notice, sufficient to warn any person
52 handling the ballot, of the restrictions set forth in section 9-140b, as
53 amended by this act, concerning who may possess or return the ballot
54 and the restrictions and penalties set forth in section 9-359 concerning
55 the completion or execution of absentee ballots. The clerk shall also
56 inscribe such clerk's official address for the return of the ballot on the
57 return envelope prior to issuance of the ballot and return envelope.

58 Sec. 3. Section 9-139a of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes
59 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*
60 *passage*):

61 (a) The Secretary of the State shall prescribe and furnish the following
62 materials to municipal clerks: The absentee ballot facsimile, the
63 application for absentee ballot authorized for use at each election or
64 primary, the [inner envelope, the outer] envelope provided for the
65 return of the ballot to the municipal clerk, the instructions for the use of
66 the absentee ballot and the envelope for mailing of such forms by the
67 clerk to the absentee ballot applicant.

68 (b) The application for absentee ballot shall be in the form of a
69 statement signed under the penalties of false statement in absentee
70 balloting. Each application shall contain (1) spaces for the signature
71 under the penalties of false statement in absentee balloting of any person
72 who assists the applicant in the completion of an application together
73 with the information required in section 9-140, as amended by this act,
74 (2) spaces for the signature and the printed or typed name of the
75 applicant, and (3) a clear and conspicuous notation of the year for which

76 such application's use is authorized.

77 (c) The Secretary of the State shall prescribe and furnish to the
78 Department of Correction an application for absentee ballot form for use
79 within Department of Correction facilities. Such form shall contain
80 spaces for all information required under subsection (b) of this section.
81 Each such form shall be consecutively numbered and shall indicate that
82 such form is only for use by an absentee ballot applicant who is
83 incarcerated in a Department of Correction facility and that such
84 applicant is required to provide in the appropriate space on such form
85 a mailing address at the Department of Correction facility in order for
86 an absentee ballot to be mailed to such applicant.

87 (d) The instructions for the use of the absentee ballot shall be in plain
88 language and shall include the steps to be taken if a vote is to be
89 cancelled or changed, and shall also contain a simple and concise
90 restatement of the provisions of subsection [(l)] (k) of section 9-150a, as
91 amended by this act, [and section 9-159o] concerning rejection of ballots
92 marked in such manner as to identify the voters casting them. [, and
93 withdrawal of ballots by persons who find they are able to vote at the
94 polls.]

95 (e) A sufficient supply of such instructions and envelopes shall be
96 printed to supply the number which the municipal clerk requests or the
97 Secretary of the State deems sufficient.

98 Sec. 4. Section 9-140 of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes is
99 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*
100 *passage*):

101 (a) (1) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, application
102 for an absentee ballot shall be made to the clerk of the municipality in
103 which the applicant is eligible to vote or has applied for such eligibility.
104 Any person who assists another person in the completion of an
105 application shall, in the space provided, sign the application and print
106 or type [his] such person's name, residence address and telephone
107 number, except that any employee of the Department of Correction who

108 so assists an incarcerated applicant shall provide the address and
109 telephone number of the department facility to which such employee is
110 assigned in lieu of such employee's residence address and telephone
111 number. Such signature shall be made under the penalties of false
112 statement in absentee balloting. The municipal clerk shall not invalidate
113 the application solely because it does not contain the name of a person
114 who assisted the applicant in the completion of the application. The
115 municipal clerk shall not distribute with an absentee ballot application
116 any material which promotes the success or defeat of any candidate or
117 referendum question. The municipal clerk shall maintain a log of all
118 absentee ballot applications provided under this subsection, including
119 the name and address of each person to whom applications are
120 provided and the number of applications provided to each such person.
121 Each absentee ballot application provided by the municipal clerk shall
122 [be consecutively numbered] display a unique ballot identification
123 number and be stamped or marked with the name of the municipality
124 issuing the application. The application shall be signed by the applicant
125 under the penalties of false statement in absentee balloting on (A) the
126 form prescribed by the Secretary of the State pursuant to section 9-139a,
127 as amended by this act, (B) a form provided by any federal department
128 or agency if applicable pursuant to section 9-153a, or (C) any of the
129 special forms of application prescribed pursuant to section 9-150c, 9-
130 153a, 9-153b, as amended by this act, 9-153d, 9-153e, 9-153f or 9-158d, if
131 applicable. Any such absentee ballot applicant who is unable to write
132 may cause the application to be completed by an authorized agent who
133 shall, in the spaces provided for the date and signature, write the date
134 and name of the absentee ballot applicant followed by the word "by"
135 and [his] such authorized agent's own signature. If the ballot is to be
136 mailed to the applicant, the applicant shall list the bona fide personal
137 mailing address of the applicant in the appropriate space on the
138 application.

139 (2) A municipal clerk may transmit an application to a person under
140 this subsection by facsimile machine or other electronic means, if so
141 requested by the applicant. If a municipal clerk has a facsimile machine
142 or other electronic means, an applicant may return a completed

143 application to the clerk by such a machine or device, provided the
144 applicant shall also mail the original of the completed application to the
145 clerk, either separately or with the absentee ballot that is issued to the
146 applicant. If the clerk does not receive such original application by the
147 close of the polls on the day of the election, primary or referendum, the
148 absentee ballot shall not be counted.

149 (3) No municipal clerk shall provide, for an election, primary or
150 referendum, five or more absentee ballot applications to any person
151 earlier than ninety days prior to the first day of issuance of absentee
152 voting sets, as provided in subsection (f) of this section, for such election,
153 primary or referendum.

154 (4) No municipal clerk shall provide or accept for return, and no
155 person shall [distribute or otherwise] use, any absentee ballot
156 application in a given year unless such application contains the notation
157 described in subdivision (3) of subsection (b) of section 9-139a, as
158 amended by this act, authorizing such application's use in such year.

159 (b) On and after July 1, 2021:

160 (1) Application for an absentee ballot may also be made to the
161 Secretary of the State through an online system established and
162 maintained by the Secretary for such purpose if an applicant's signature
163 is in a database described in subsection (b) of section 9-19k, or the system
164 described in section 9-4c, and such signature may be imported into such
165 online application system.

166 (2) In order for an application for an absentee ballot to be submitted
167 through the online system described in subdivision (1) of this
168 subsection, the applicant's signature shall be obtained from a database
169 described in subsection (b) of section 9-19k, or the system described in
170 section 9-4c, and the applicant shall, on an online form prescribed by the
171 Secretary, (A) type [his or her] such applicant's name, (B) indicate the
172 municipality in which such applicant is eligible to vote or has applied
173 for such eligibility, and (C) mark a box associated with the following
174 statement:

175 "By clicking on the box below, I swear or affirm all of the following
176 under penalty of false statement in absentee balloting:

177 1. I am the person whose name is provided on this form, and I desire
178 to apply for an absentee ballot.

179 2. I am eligible to vote in the municipality provided on this form or
180 have applied for such eligibility.

181 3. I authorize the Department of Motor Vehicles or other Connecticut
182 state agency to transmit to the Connecticut Secretary of the State my
183 signature that is on file with such agency and understand that such
184 signature will be used by the Secretary on this online application for an
185 absentee ballot as if I had signed this form personally."

186 (3) Not later than twenty-four hours after receipt of any submitted
187 application for an absentee ballot through the online system described
188 in subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Secretary shall transmit such
189 application to the clerk of the municipality indicated in such application.

190 (c) The municipal clerk shall check the name of each absentee ballot
191 applicant against the last-completed registry list and any updated
192 registry lists on file in the municipal clerk's office. If the name of such
193 applicant does not appear on any of such lists, the clerk shall send such
194 applicant a notice, in a form prescribed by the Secretary of the State, to
195 the effect that (1) the applicant's name did not appear on the list of
196 electors of the municipality at the time the application was processed,
197 and (2) unless the applicant is admitted or restored as an elector of the
198 municipality by the applicable cutoff dates, an absentee ballot will not
199 be mailed to [him] such applicant. Such notice shall not be so mailed if,
200 prior to the mailing of the notice, the registrars provide the clerk with
201 reliable information showing the absentee ballot applicant to be an
202 elector of the municipality.

203 (d) (1) An absentee voting set shall consist of (A) the mailing envelope
204 containing all other items of such set and used to issue such set to the
205 applicant, (B) an absentee ballot, [inner and outer envelopes] (C) an

206 envelope for [its] the ballot's return, (D) instructions for [its] the ballot's
207 use, and (E) if applicable, explanatory texts concerning ballot questions,
208 as provided for in sections 2-30a and 9-369b, as amended by this act.

209 (2) No other material shall be included with an absentee voting set
210 issued to an applicant, except (A) as provided in sections 9-153e and 9-
211 153f, [or] (B) where necessary to correct an error or omission as provided
212 in section 9-153c, as amended by this act, or (C) any voting information
213 as may be prescribed by the Secretary of the State, provided no such
214 voting information shall promote the success or defeat of any candidate
215 or question.

216 (e) Upon receipt of an application, the municipal clerk shall, unless a
217 notice is mailed to the applicant pursuant to subsection (c) of this
218 section, [write the serial number of the outer] ensure the unique ballot
219 identification number appearing on the return envelope included in the
220 absentee voting set to be issued to the applicant matches the unique
221 identification number displayed on the application form in the space
222 provided for [that purpose on the application form. Sets shall be issued
223 to applicants in consecutive ascending numerical order of the envelope
224 serial numbers, and] such purpose. As absentee voting sets are issued to
225 applicants, the clerk shall keep a list of the unique ballot identification
226 numbers [indicating beside each number] and shall indicate beside each
227 unique ballot identification number on the list the name of the applicant
228 to whom [that set] the absentee voting set corresponding with such
229 unique ballot identification number was issued. The list shall be
230 preserved as a public record as required by section 9-150b, as amended
231 by this act.

232 (f) Absentee voting sets shall be issued beginning on the thirty-first
233 day before an election and the twenty-first day before a primary or, if
234 such day is a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, beginning on the next
235 preceding business day.

236 (g) On the first day of issuance of absentee voting sets, the municipal
237 clerk shall mail an absentee voting set to each applicant whose
238 application was received by the clerk prior to that day. When the clerk

239 receives an application during the time period in which absentee voting
240 sets are to be issued, [he] the clerk shall mail an absentee voting set to
241 the applicant [,] within twenty-four hours, unless the applicant submits
242 [his] such applicant's application in person at the office of the clerk and
243 [asks] requests to be given [his] such applicant's absentee voting set
244 immediately, in which case the clerk shall comply with the request. Any
245 absentee voting set to be mailed to an applicant shall be mailed to the
246 bona fide personal mailing address shown on the application. If an
247 applicant has provided a mailing address at a Department of Correction
248 facility and such applicant is subsequently transferred to another
249 Department of Correction facility, the Commissioner of Correction shall
250 ensure delivery of the absentee voting set to such applicant. Issuance of
251 absentee voting sets shall also be subject to the provisions of subsection
252 (c) of this section, section 9-150c [and section 9-159q] concerning persons
253 designated to deliver or return ballots in cases involving unforeseen
254 illness or disability and section 9-159q, as amended by this act,
255 concerning supervised voting at certain health care institutions.

256 (h) No absentee ballot shall be issued on the day of an election or
257 primary, or after the opening of the polls on the day of a referendum,
258 except in cases involving unforeseen illness or disability [or presidential
259 or overseas ballots] as provided in section 9-150c and presidential or
260 overseas ballots as provided in sections 9-158a to 9-158m, inclusive.

261 (i) The municipal clerk shall file executed applications in alphabetical
262 order according to the applicants' surnames. Such applications shall be
263 preserved as a public record as required by section 9-150b, as amended
264 by this act.

265 (j) No person shall pay or give any compensation to another, and no
266 person shall accept any compensation, solely for (1) distributing
267 absentee ballot applications obtained from a municipal clerk or the
268 Secretary of the State, or (2) assisting any other person in the execution
269 of an absentee ballot.

270 (k) (1) A person shall register with the municipal clerk before
271 distributing five or more absentee ballot applications for an election,

272 primary or referendum, not including applications distributed to such
273 person's immediate family. Such requirement shall not apply to a person
274 who is the designee of an applicant or to any employee of the
275 Department of Correction who provides the application for absentee
276 ballot form prescribed under subsection (c) of section 9-139a, as
277 amended by this act, to one or more incarcerated absentee ballot
278 applicants.

279 (2) The municipal clerk shall reject the application of any absentee
280 ballot applicant made upon the form prescribed under subsection (c) of
281 section 9-139a, as amended by this act, if such form indicates any
282 address other than an address at a Department of Correction facility.
283 The municipal clerk shall maintain a log of all applications of
284 incarcerated absentee ballot applicants received by such municipal
285 clerk, which log shall indicate the name and address of each applicant,
286 the date of receipt of each application and the date such municipal clerk
287 mailed the absentee ballot to such applicant or the reason why such
288 application was rejected.

289 (3) Any person who distributes absentee ballot applications shall
290 maintain a list of the names and addresses of prospective absentee ballot
291 applicants who receive such applications, and shall file such list with
292 the municipal clerk prior to the date of the primary, election or
293 referendum for which the applications were so distributed, except that
294 such requirements shall not apply to any employee of the Department
295 of Correction who provides the application for absentee ballot form
296 prescribed under subsection (c) of section 9-139a, as amended by this
297 act, to incarcerated absentee ballot applicants. Any person who
298 distributes absentee ballot applications and receives an executed
299 application shall forthwith file the application with the municipal clerk.

300 (l) No candidate, party or political committee, or agent of such
301 candidate or committee shall mail or deliver unsolicited applications for
302 absentee ballots to any person, unless such [mailing includes]
303 committee or agent includes with such mailing or delivery: (1) A written
304 [explanation of the eligibility requirements for voting by absentee ballot

305 as prescribed in subsection (a) of section 9-135] disclaimer that such
306 mailing or delivery was (A) paid for by such committee or agent, and
307 (B) in the case of a candidate committee, approved by the applicable
308 candidate, and (2) a written [warning that voting or attempting to vote
309 by absentee ballot without meeting one or more of such eligibility
310 requirements subjects the elector or applicant to potential civil and
311 criminal penalties] explanation of the various ways an absentee ballot
312 may be returned, as provided in subsection (a) of section 9-140b, as
313 amended by this act. As used in this subsection, "agent" means any
314 person authorized to act on behalf of another person.

315 (m) The Secretary of the State shall conspicuously post on the
316 Secretary of the State's web site, adjacent to the absentee ballot
317 application form available for downloading, a notice that the
318 application may be downloaded by a person only for (1) the person's
319 own use, (2) the use of a member of the person's immediate family, or
320 (3) the use of a designee of the applicant. The notice shall also contain
321 an advisory statement concerning the requirements of subsection (k) of
322 this section.

323 (n) The State Elections Enforcement Commission, in consultation
324 with the Secretary of the State, shall prepare a summary of the
325 requirements and prohibitions of the absentee voting laws, which shall
326 be posted on said agencies' web sites. Candidates and political party
327 chairpersons shall provide such summary to campaign and party
328 employees and volunteers.

329 (o) As used in this section, (1) "immediate family" has the same
330 meaning as provided in subsection (a) of section 9-140b, as amended by
331 this act, and (2) "designee" has the same meaning as provided in
332 subsection (b) of section 9-140b, as amended by this act.

333 Sec. 5. Section 9-140a of the general statutes is repealed and the
334 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

335 Each absentee ballot applicant shall sign the form on the [inner]
336 return envelope provided for in section 9-137, as amended by this act,

337 which shall constitute a statement under the penalties of false statement
338 in absentee balloting. Any absentee ballot applicant who is unable to
339 write may cause [his] such applicant's name to be signed on the form by
340 an authorized agent who shall, in the space provided for the signature,
341 write the name of the applicant followed by the word "by" and [his] such
342 authorized agent's own signature. The failure of the applicant or
343 authorized agent to date the form shall not invalidate the ballot. The
344 ballot shall be inserted in the [inner envelope, and the inner envelope
345 shall be inserted in the outer] return envelope [,] prior to the return of
346 the ballot to the municipal clerk. If an applicant is required to return
347 identification with the ballot pursuant to the Help America Vote Act,
348 P.L. 107-252, as amended from time to time, the municipal clerk shall
349 provide to the applicant an additional envelope preaddressed to the
350 municipal clerk for the return of such applicant's identification, which
351 envelope may be postage prepaid, and the applicant shall return such
352 identification [shall be inserted in the outer envelope so such
353 identification can be viewed without opening the inner envelope] to the
354 municipal clerk in such additional envelope.

355 Sec. 6. Section 9-140b of the general statutes, as amended by section
356 88 of public act 26-1, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
357 thereof (*Effective from passage*):

358 (a) An absentee ballot shall be cast at a primary, election or
359 referendum only if: (1) [It] Such ballot is mailed by (A) the ballot
360 applicant, (B) a designee of a person who applies for an absentee ballot
361 because of illness or physical disability, or (C) a member of the
362 immediate family of an applicant who is a student, so that [it] the ballot
363 is received by the clerk of the municipality in which the applicant is
364 qualified to vote not later than the close of the polls; (2) [it] such ballot
365 is returned by the applicant in person to [the] such clerk by the day
366 before the election or primary or prior to the opening of the polls on the
367 day of the referendum; (3) [it] such ballot is returned by a designee of
368 an ill or physically disabled ballot applicant, in person, to [said] such
369 clerk not later than the close of the polls on the day of the election,
370 primary or referendum; (4) [it] such ballot is returned by a member of

371 the immediate family of the [absentee voter] applicant, in person, to
372 [said] such clerk not later than the close of the polls on the day of the
373 election, primary or referendum; (5) in the case of a presidential or
374 overseas ballot, [it] such ballot is mailed or otherwise returned pursuant
375 to the provisions of section 9-158g, as amended by this act; or (6) [it] such
376 ballot is returned with the proper identification as required by the Help
377 America Vote Act, P.L. 107-252, as amended from time to time, if
378 applicable, [inserted in the outer envelope so such identification can be
379 viewed without opening the inner envelope] in accordance with the
380 provisions of section 9-140a, as amended by this act. A person returning
381 an absentee ballot to the municipal clerk pursuant to subdivision (3) or
382 (4) of this subsection shall present identification and, on the [outer]
383 return envelope of the absentee ballot, sign [his] such person's name in
384 the presence of the municipal clerk [,] and indicate [his] such person's
385 address [, his] and relationship to the voter or [his] position [,] and the
386 date and time of such return. An absentee ballot shall be deemed cast
387 when it is received and accepted by the municipal clerk in accordance
388 with the provisions of this subsection, provided the statement on the
389 return envelope for such absentee ballot is signed by the applicant. As
390 used in this section, "immediate family" means a dependent relative
391 who resides in the individual's household or any spouse, child, parent
392 or sibling of the individual.

393 (b) As used in this section and section 9-150c, "designee" means (1) a
394 person who is caring for the applicant because of the applicant's illness
395 or physical disability, including, but not limited to, a licensed physician
396 or a registered or practical nurse, (2) a member of the applicant's family,
397 who is designated by an absentee ballot applicant and who consents to
398 such designation, or (3) a police officer, registrar of voters, deputy
399 registrar of voters or assistant registrar of voters in the municipality in
400 which the applicant resides.

401 (c) (1) For purposes of this section, "mailed" means (A) sent by the
402 United States Postal Service or any commercial carrier, courier or
403 messenger service recognized and approved by the Secretary of the
404 State, or (B) deposited in a secure drop box designated by the municipal

405 clerk for such purpose, in accordance with instructions prescribed by
406 the Secretary.

407 (2) (A) In the case of absentee ballots mailed under subparagraph (B)
408 of subdivision (1) of this subsection, beginning on the first day of
409 issuance of absentee voting sets, as provided in subsection (f) of section
410 9-140, as amended by this act, and on each [weekday] business day
411 thereafter until the close of the polls at the election, primary or
412 referendum, including at the close of the polls at such election, primary
413 or referendum, the municipal clerk shall retrieve from the secure drop
414 box described in said subparagraph each such ballot deposited in such
415 drop box.

416 (B) On and after July 1, 2025, each municipality shall provide a video
417 recording device for each secure drop box described in subparagraph
418 (B) of subdivision (1) of this subsection within such municipality, which
419 device's recordings shall capture the location of such drop box and
420 evidence the date and time of each such recording beginning on the first
421 day of issuance of absentee voting sets, as provided in subsection (f) of
422 section 9-140, as amended by this act, and until the last retrieval of
423 absentee ballots from such drop box at the close of the polls at the
424 election or primary. Each such recording shall, as soon as practicable, be
425 made publicly available from the date of recording, but in no case later
426 than five days after such last retrieval. Each such recording shall be
427 retained by the municipality for a period of twelve months and may be
428 destroyed at the end of such period, except that the State Elections
429 Enforcement Commission or a court of competent jurisdiction may
430 order that such period be extended until the conclusion of any
431 investigation related to such recording.

432 (3) The Secretary of the State may adopt regulations, in accordance
433 with the provisions of chapter 54, concerning the use of secure drop
434 boxes for the deposit of absentee ballots, including, but not limited to,
435 the placement and positioning of any such drop box and the video
436 recording of any such drop box and retention of any such recording.

437 (d) No person shall have in [his] such person's possession any official

438 absentee ballot or ballot envelope for use at any primary, election or
439 referendum except the applicant to whom it was issued, the Secretary of
440 the State or [his or her] the Secretary's authorized agents, any official
441 printer of absentee ballot forms and [his] such printer's designated
442 carriers, the United States Postal Service, any other carrier, courier or
443 messenger service recognized and approved by the Secretary of the
444 State, any person authorized by a municipal clerk to receive and process
445 official absentee ballot forms on behalf of the municipal clerk, any
446 authorized primary, election or referendum official or any other person
447 authorized by any provision of the general statutes to possess a ballot or
448 ballot envelope.

449 (e) No (1) candidate, or (2) agent of a candidate, political party or
450 committee, as defined in section 9-601, shall knowingly be present when
451 an absentee ballot applicant executes an absentee ballot, except when
452 (A) [when] the candidate or agent is (i) a member of the immediate
453 family of the applicant, or (ii) authorized by law to be present, or (B)
454 [when] the absentee ballot is executed in the office of the municipal clerk
455 and the municipal clerk or an employee of the municipal clerk is a
456 candidate or agent.

457 Sec. 7. Section 9-140c of the general statutes is repealed and the
458 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

459 (a) (1) The municipal clerk shall retain the return envelopes
460 containing absentee ballots received by [him] such clerk under section
461 9-140b, as amended by this act, and shall not open such return
462 envelopes. [The] As the municipal clerk receives each absentee ballot,
463 such clerk shall first make a record, for the purposes of subdivision (3)
464 of this subsection, of each return envelope on which the applicant did
465 not sign the statement and shall then endorse over [his] such clerk's
466 signature [,] upon each [outer] return envelope [as he receives it,] (A)
467 the date and precise time of its receipt, and (B) the method of its receipt,
468 in accordance with the provisions of subdivision (2) of this subsection.
469 The clerk shall make an affidavit attesting to the accuracy of all such
470 endorsements [, and at the close of the polls] and shall deliver such

471 affidavit at the close of the polls to the head moderator, who shall
472 endorse the time of its receipt and return it to the clerk after all counting
473 is complete. The clerk shall preserve the affidavit for one hundred eighty
474 days in accordance with the requirements of section 9-150b, as amended
475 by this act. The clerk shall keep a list of the names of the applicants who
476 return absentee ballots to the clerk under section 9-140b, as amended by
477 this act. The list shall be preserved as a public record as required by
478 section 9-150b, as amended by this act.

479 (2) The municipal clerk shall record on the [outer] return envelope of
480 each absentee ballot [returned] received by such clerk under section 9-
481 140b, as amended by this act, whether such absentee ballot was (A) sent
482 by the United States Postal Service or any commercial carrier, courier or
483 messenger service, (B) deposited in a secure drop box, in which case the
484 location of such drop box shall also be so recorded, (C) returned in
485 person by an elector, or (D) returned in person by the designee or
486 immediate family member of an elector. As soon as reasonably
487 practicable after the close of the polls at an election or primary, the
488 municipal clerk shall submit to the Secretary of the State a report
489 detailing the total count of all absentee ballots returned for such election
490 or primary, broken down by each method described in subparagraphs
491 (A) to (D), inclusive, of this subdivision.

492 (3) (A) If the municipal clerk receives an absentee ballot without the
493 statement on the return envelope signed by the applicant, such absentee
494 ballot may be cured in person at the municipal clerk's office beginning
495 on the first day of issuance of absentee voting sets, as provided in
496 subsection (f) of section 9-140, as amended by this act, and until the close
497 of the polls on the day of the election, primary or referendum. After such
498 close of the polls, no such absentee ballot may be cured.

499 (B) In the case of any absentee ballot described in subparagraph (A)
500 of this subdivision, the municipal clerk shall use best efforts to contact
501 the affected voter as soon as possible, but in no case later than twenty-
502 four hours after receiving the absentee ballot, for the purpose of curing
503 such ballot pursuant to said subparagraph. During the period beginning

504 twenty-four hours prior to the closing of the polls and until such closing
505 of the polls, the municipal clerk shall use best efforts to contact the
506 affected voter for such purpose immediately upon receiving the
507 absentee ballot. The municipal clerk's best efforts shall include, but need
508 not be limited to, contacting the affected voter by (i) calling the
509 telephone number or numbers listed on the voter's absentee ballot
510 application and voter registration, if the voter has provided any, and (ii)
511 sending an electronic mail to the electronic mail address listed on the
512 voter's absentee ballot application and voter registration, if the voter has
513 provided any. If the voter has provided neither a telephone number nor
514 an electronic mail address, the municipal clerk shall exercise discretion
515 in attempting to contact the voter by other means.

516 (b) (1) Beginning [not earlier than the seventh day before the election,
517 primary or referendum] the day after the first day of issuance of
518 absentee voting sets, as provided in subsection (f) of section 9-140, as
519 amended by this act, and on any weekday thereafter, all absentee ballots
520 received by the municipal clerk at or prior to eleven o'clock a.m. of [such
521 day] the day of the election, primary or referendum may be sorted into
522 voting districts by the municipal clerk and checked as provided in this
523 subsection. On any such day, beginning as soon as the ballots have been
524 sorted, the registrars of voters, without opening the [outer] return
525 envelopes, may check the names of the applicants returning ballots on
526 the official checklist to be used at the election, primary or referendum
527 by indicating "absentee" or "A" preceding each such name and, if
528 unaffiliated electors are authorized under section 9-431 to vote in the
529 primary of either of two parties, the designation of the party in which
530 the applicants are voting preceding each such name. Unless absentee
531 ballots are to be counted in the respective polling places, pursuant to
532 subsection (b) of section 9-147a, the registrars shall also place such
533 indication on a duplicate checklist to be retained by the municipal clerk
534 until the municipal clerk delivers such duplicate checklist to the
535 registrars, in accordance with subsection (e) of this section, for the use
536 of the absentee ballot counters pursuant to subsection (i) of this section.

537 (2) All absentee ballots received at or prior to eleven o'clock a.m. of

538 the last day before the election, primary or referendum which is not a
539 Sunday or legal holiday, shall be sorted into voting districts by the
540 municipal clerk and checked as provided in subdivision (1) of this
541 subsection not later than such last day.

542 (c) If the name of the applicant returning the ballot is not on the
543 official checklist for any polling place in such municipality, the
544 registrars shall endorse on the face of [such outer] the return envelope
545 the word "rejected", followed by a statement of the reasons for rejection,
546 and [the outer] such return envelope shall not be opened [or the ballot]
547 nor shall such ballot be counted.

548 (d) After such checking has been completed on any such day, the
549 municipal clerk shall seal the unopened ballots in a package and retain
550 them in a safe place.

551 (e) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, ballots
552 received at or prior to eleven o'clock a.m. on the last day before the
553 election, primary or referendum shall be delivered by the municipal
554 clerk to the registrars [between ten o'clock a.m. and twelve o'clock noon]
555 not later than seven o'clock a.m. on the day of the election, [or] primary
556 [and at twelve o'clock noon on the day of a] or referendum. Unless
557 absentee ballots are to be counted in the respective polling places,
558 pursuant to subsection (b) of section 9-147a, the municipal clerk shall
559 also deliver to the registrars at this time the duplicate checklist provided
560 for in subsection (b) of this section, for the use of the absentee ballot
561 counters pursuant to subsection (i) of this section.

562 (2) [The] In the case of a special election or referendum, the municipal
563 clerk may deliver [the] such ballots at a time that is later than [the time
564 provided in subdivision (1) of this subsection] seven o'clock a.m. on the
565 day of such special election or referendum, provided such time is
566 mutually agreed upon by the municipal clerk and registrars and is not
567 later than [eight] four o'clock p.m. on the day of [the election, primary]
568 such special election or referendum.

569 (f) Absentee ballots timely received by the municipal clerk after

570 eleven o'clock a.m. of such last day before an election, primary or
571 referendum shall be sorted into voting districts by the clerk and retained
572 by the clerk separately until delivered to the registrars of voters for
573 checking.

574 (g) Any or all of such ballots received after eleven o'clock a.m. of such
575 last day before an election, primary or referendum and before six o'clock
576 p.m. on the day of the election, primary or referendum shall, upon
577 request of the registrars, be delivered to the registrars by the municipal
578 clerk at six o'clock p.m. on the day of the election, primary or
579 referendum for checking, or at a later time mutually agreed upon by the
580 clerk and registrars, provided such time is not later than eight o'clock
581 p.m. on the day of the election, primary or referendum.

582 (h) Absentee ballots received after six o'clock p.m. on the day of the
583 election, primary or referendum and any ballots received prior to six
584 o'clock p.m. of such day which were not delivered earlier shall be
585 delivered to the registrars at the close of the polls for checking. Although
586 absentee ballots shall be checked by the registrars [of voters] at various
587 times throughout the election, primary or referendum day, absentee
588 ballots may be counted at one single time during such day.

589 (i) (1) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the absentee
590 ballot counters, upon receipt of the ballots delivered by the municipal
591 clerk to the registrars at six o'clock p.m. on the day of the election,
592 primary or referendum and at the close of the polls pursuant to
593 subsections (g) and (h) of this section, shall check the names of the
594 applicants returning ballots on the duplicate checklist in the same
595 manner as provided in subsections (b) and (c) of this section.

596 (2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision,
597 the names of applicants whose ballots were delivered at six o'clock p.m.
598 on the day of the election, primary or referendum shall be called in to
599 the appropriate polling places where they shall be checked by the
600 checkers on the official checklists, and they shall also be checked by the
601 absentee ballot counters on the duplicate checklist required under
602 subsection (b) of this section.

603 (B) Whenever absentee ballots are counted in any polling place
604 pursuant to subsection (b) of section 9-147a, the names of applicants
605 whose ballots were delivered at six o'clock p.m. on the day of the
606 election, primary or referendum shall be checked by the absentee ballot
607 counters and checkers at such polling place on the official checklist used
608 at such polling place.

609 (3) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision,
610 the names of applicants whose ballots were delivered at the close of the
611 polls shall be checked by the absentee ballot counters on the official
612 checklists used at the polling places and such official checklists, bearing
613 the certifications required by section 9-307, shall be delivered by the
614 registrars or assistant registrars to the central counting moderator for
615 that purpose.

616 (B) Whenever absentee ballots are counted in any polling place
617 pursuant to subsection (b) of section 9-147a, the official checklist used at
618 such polling place shall remain in such polling place for checking by the
619 absentee ballot counters at such polling place.

620 (4) If the name of an applicant returning a ballot has been checked on
621 the official checklist as having voted in person, the absentee ballot
622 counters shall, in checking the ballots, endorse on the face of the [outer]
623 return envelope the word "rejected" followed by a statement of the
624 reason for rejection, and [the outer] such return envelope shall not be
625 opened [or the ballot] nor shall such ballot be counted.

626 (5) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision,
627 when central counting is completed and the result is announced, the
628 central counting moderator shall deliver the duplicate checklist, the
629 official checklists and the returns required by section 9-150b, as
630 amended by this act, to the head moderator.

631 (B) Whenever absentee ballots are counted in any polling place
632 pursuant to subsection (b) of section 9-147a, and such counting is
633 completed and the result for such polling place is announced, the
634 moderator for such polling place shall deliver the official checklist used

635 at such polling place and the return required by section 9-150b, as
636 amended by this act, to the head moderator.

637 (j) Each time absentee ballots are delivered by the clerk to the
638 registrars pursuant to this section, the clerk and registrars shall execute
639 an affidavit of delivery and receipt stating the number of ballots
640 delivered. The clerk shall preserve the affidavit for the period prescribed
641 in section 9-150b, as amended by this act.

642 (k) The absentee ballot counters shall count, in the manner provided
643 in section 9-150a, as amended by this act, each group of absentee ballots
644 upon receipt from the registrars.

645 (l) The municipal clerk shall retain all [outer] return envelopes
646 containing absentee ballots received by [him] such clerk after the close
647 of the polls, unopened, for the period prescribed in section 9-150b, as
648 amended by this act.

649 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The office of the Secretary of the
650 State shall develop and install integrated ballot-tracking software with
651 the state-wide centralized voter registration system described in section
652 9-50b of the general statutes, for use by electors who vote by absentee
653 ballot. Such software shall, at a minimum, permit the elector to track (1)
654 when the municipal clerk has received and accepted the elector's
655 absentee ballot application, (2) when the municipal clerk's office has
656 mailed the absentee ballot set to the elector, (3) when the absentee ballot
657 set has been delivered to the elector, (4) when the absentee ballot being
658 returned by the elector has been delivered to the municipal clerk, and
659 (5) whether the elector's returned absentee ballot has been accepted,
660 requires curing pursuant to subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of section
661 9-140c of the general statutes, as amended by this act, or has been
662 rejected.

663 Sec. 9. Section 9-140e of the general statutes is repealed and the
664 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

665 (a) Any elector who [is permanently physically disabled or suffering

666 from a long-term illness and who files an application for an absentee
667 ballot with a certification from a primary care provider, indicating that
668 such elector is permanently physically disabled or suffering from a long-
669 term illness and unable to appear in person at such elector's designated
670 polling location, shall be eligible for] files an application for an absentee
671 ballot may simultaneously request permanent absentee ballot status, in
672 a space provided on such application for such purpose. Each elector
673 granted permanent absentee ballot status [and shall receive] shall be
674 issued an absentee ballot for each election, primary or referendum
675 conducted in such elector's municipality for which such elector is
676 eligible to vote. Such elector's permanent absentee ballot status shall
677 remain in effect until such elector: (1) Is removed from the official
678 registry list of the municipality, (2) is removed from permanent absentee
679 ballot status [pursuant to] in accordance with the provisions of
680 subsection (b) of this section, or (3) requests [that he or she] in writing
681 to the registrar of voters that such elector no longer receive such
682 permanent absentee ballot status.

683 (b) [The registrars of voters shall send written notice to each such
684 elector with permanent absentee ballot status in January of each year,
685 on a form prescribed by the Secretary of the State, for the purpose of
686 determining if such elector continues to reside at the address indicated
687 on the elector's permanent absentee ballot application. If such written
688 notice is returned as undeliverable, the elector in question shall be
689 removed from permanent absentee ballot status. If such elector indicates
690 on such notice that the elector no longer resides at such address and the
691 elector's new address is within the same municipality, the registrars of
692 voters shall change the elector's address pursuant to section 9-35 and
693 such elector shall retain permanent absentee ballot status. If the elector
694 indicates on such notice that the elector no longer resides in the
695 municipality, the registrars of voters shall remove such individual from
696 the registry list of the municipality and send such individual an
697 application for voter registration. Failure to return such written notice
698 shall not result in the removal of an elector from the official registry list
699 of the municipality or from permanent absentee ballot status.] An
700 elector granted permanent absentee ballot status shall be removed from

701 such status whenever (1) such elector's absentee ballot is returned as
702 undeliverable, (2) such elector submits a change of address form for a
703 move outside the state with the National Change of Address System of
704 the United States Postal Service, (3) a registrar of voters of the
705 municipality in which such elector previously resided receives
706 information or data, used to maintain the state-wide centralized voter
707 registration system under section 9-50c, that such elector has moved
708 outside the state, (4) the Secretary of the State or a registrar of voters of
709 the municipality in which such elector previously resided receives
710 information under section 9-21 that such elector has registered to vote
711 outside the state, or (5) such elector's name is placed on the inactive
712 registry list compiled under section 9-35.

713 (c) The Secretary of the State shall develop and conduct a state-wide
714 public awareness mailing, beginning as soon as practicable after the
715 effective date of this section, to educate the public regarding changes to
716 the absentee voting process and the availability of permanent absentee
717 ballot status. The Secretary shall make available to each municipal clerk
718 the materials comprising such mailing and, on and after the day such
719 materials are so made available, each municipal clerk shall include such
720 materials with each absentee ballot application provided by such
721 municipal clerk in 2026.

722 Sec. 10. Section 9-150a of the general statutes, as amended by section
723 90 of public act 26-1, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
724 thereof (*Effective from passage*):

725 (a) [The] Immediately after the opening of the polls on the day of an
726 election, primary or referendum, the absentee ballot counters shall
727 proceed to the central counting location or to the respective polling
728 places when counting is to take place pursuant to subsection (b) of
729 section 9-147a, [at the times designated by the registrars of voters.]

730 (b) At the time each group of ballots is delivered to them pursuant to
731 section 9-140c, as amended by this act, the counters shall perform any
732 checking of such ballots required by subsection (i) of said section and
733 shall then proceed as hereinafter provided.

734 (c) Except with respect to ballots marked "Rejected" pursuant to
735 section 9-140c, as amended by this act, or other applicable law, the
736 counters shall remove the [inner envelopes] absentee ballots from the
737 [outer] return envelopes, shall note the total number of absentee ballots
738 received and shall report such total to the moderator. They shall
739 similarly note and separately so report the total numbers of presidential
740 ballots and overseas ballots received pursuant to sections 9-158a to 9-
741 158m, inclusive.

742 (d) (1) (A) If the statement on the [inner] return envelope has not been
743 signed as required by section 9-140a, as amended by this act, such
744 [inner] return envelope shall not be opened [or] nor shall the ballot be
745 removed therefrom. [, and such inner envelope shall be replaced in the
746 opened outer envelope which shall be marked "Rejected" and the reason
747 therefor endorsed thereon by the counters.] The return envelope shall
748 be marked "Rejected" and the reason for such rejection shall be endorsed
749 on such return envelope by the counters.

750 (B) The moderator shall maintain a log of each absentee ballot
751 applicant whose ballot was marked "Rejected" under subparagraph (A)
752 of this subdivision and include thereon for each such applicant the
753 reason for the rejection. The moderator shall transmit such log to the
754 Secretary of the State at the same time and in the same manner as the
755 duplicate list to be transmitted to the Secretary by electronic means in
756 accordance with section 9-314.

757 (2) (A) If such statement is signed but the individual completing the
758 ballot is an individual described in subsection (a) of section 9-23r and
759 has not met the requirements of subsection (e) of section 9-23r, as
760 amended by this act, the counters shall replace the ballot in the opened
761 [inner envelope, replace the inner envelope in the opened outer] return
762 envelope and shall mark "Rejected as an Absentee Ballot" and endorse
763 the reason for such rejection on [the outer] such return envelope, and
764 the ballot shall be treated as a provisional ballot for federal offices only,
765 pursuant to sections 9-232i to 9-232o, inclusive.

766 (B) The moderator shall maintain a log of each absentee ballot

767 applicant whose ballot was marked "Rejected as an Absentee Ballot"
768 under subparagraph (A) of this subdivision and include thereon for
769 each such applicant the reason for the rejection. The moderator shall
770 transmit such log to the Secretary of the State at the same time and in
771 the same manner as the duplicate list to be transmitted to the Secretary
772 by electronic means in accordance with section 9-314.

773 [(e) The counters shall then remove the absentee ballots from the
774 remaining inner envelopes.]

775 [(f)] (e) Before the ballots are counted, all opened [outer and inner]
776 envelopes from which such ballots have been removed, and all [outer]
777 envelopes marked "Rejected" as required by law, shall be placed and
778 sealed by the counters, separately by voting district, in depository
779 envelopes prescribed by the Secretary of the State and provided by the
780 municipal clerk. The counters shall seal such depository envelopes by
781 wrapping them lengthwise and sideways with nonreusable tape,
782 endorse on each such envelope their names, the voting district and the
783 time of the count, and deliver such envelopes to the moderator.

784 [(g)] (f) The counters shall then count such ballots as provided in this
785 section. The moderator shall supervise the counting.

786 [(h)] (g) The Secretary of the State shall provide a procedure manual
787 for counting absentee ballots. The manual shall include a description of
788 the steps to be followed in receiving, handling, counting and preserving
789 absentee ballots. Facsimile ballots shall be printed in the manual,
790 illustrating potential variations in ballot markings along with the correct
791 interpretation to be given in each situation illustrated.

792 [(i)] (h) (1) Except as otherwise provided in this section the provisions
793 of section 9-265 shall apply to write-in votes on absentee ballots at
794 elections.

795 (2) Votes cast by absentee ballot at a primary may be counted only for
796 candidates whose names appear on the ballot on primary day, and no
797 write-in vote shall be counted except as provided in subdivision (3) of

798 this subsection.

799 (3) If a write-in vote on an absentee ballot is cast for a candidate for
800 any office whose name appears on the ballot for that office on election
801 or primary day, such candidate's name shall be deemed to have been
802 checked on such ballot and, except as otherwise provided in subsection
803 [(j)] (i) of this section, one vote shall be counted and recorded for such
804 candidate for such office.

805 (4) Except as otherwise provided in section 9-265, if the name of a
806 registered write-in candidate for an office is written in for such office on
807 an absentee ballot it shall be deemed validly written in for purposes of
808 subsection [(j)] (i) of this section.

809 [(j)] (i) In the counting of absentee ballots the intent of the voter shall
810 govern, provided the following conclusive presumptions, where
811 applicable, shall prevail in determining such intent:

812 (1) If the names of more candidates for an office than the voter is
813 entitled to vote for are checked or validly written in, then the vote cast
814 for that office shall be deemed an invalid overvote.

815 (2) If the name of a candidate who has vacated [his] such candidate's
816 candidacy is checked, such vote shall not be counted.

817 (3) On an absentee ballot on which candidates' names are printed, a
818 vote shall be deemed cast only for each candidate whose name is
819 individually checked or validly written in, except as otherwise provided
820 in this subsection. If a party designation is circled, checked, underscored
821 or similarly marked in any manner, or written in, no vote shall be
822 deemed cast or cancelled for any candidate by virtue of such marking
823 or writing.

824 [(k)] (j) If the intent of an absentee voter is difficult to ascertain due to
825 uncertain, conflicting or incorrect ballot markings which are not clearly
826 addressed in this section or in the procedure manual for counting
827 absentee ballots provided by the Secretary of the State, the absentee
828 ballot counters shall submit the ballot and their question to the

829 moderator. They shall then count the ballot in accordance with the
830 moderator's decision as to the voter's intent, if such intent is
831 ascertainable. A ballot or part of a ballot on which the intent is
832 determined by the moderator to be not ascertainable, shall not be
833 counted. The moderator shall endorse on the ballot the question and
834 [his] such moderator's decision.

835 [(l)] (k) No absentee ballot shall be rejected as a marked ballot unless,
836 in the opinion of the moderator, it was marked for the purpose of
837 providing a means of identifying the voter who cast it.

838 [(m)] (l) After the absentee ballots have been so counted they shall be
839 placed by the counters, separately by voting district, in depository
840 envelopes prescribed by the Secretary of the State and provided by the
841 municipal clerk. Any notes, worksheets, or other written materials used
842 by the counters in counting such ballots shall be endorsed by them with
843 their names, the date and the time of the count and shall also be placed
844 in such depository envelopes together with the ballots, and with the
845 separate record of the number of votes cast on such ballots for each
846 candidate as required by section 9-150b, as amended by this act. Such
847 depository envelopes shall then be sealed, endorsed and delivered to
848 the moderator by the counters in the same manner as provided in
849 subsection [(f)] (e) of this section.

850 Sec. 11. Subsections (e) to (i), inclusive, of section 9-150b of the general
851 statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof
852 (*Effective from passage*):

853 (e) The sealed depository envelopes required by subsections [(f) and
854 (m)] (e) and (l) of section 9-150a, as amended by this act, shall be
855 returned by the moderator to the municipal clerk as soon as practicable
856 on or before the day following the election, primary or referendum.

857 (f) The municipal clerk shall preserve for sixty days after the election,
858 primary or referendum the depository envelopes containing opened
859 envelopes and rejected ballots required by subsection [(f)] (e) of section
860 9-150a, as amended by this act, and shall so preserve for one hundred

861 eighty days the depository envelopes containing counted ballots and
862 related materials required by subsection [(m)] (l) of section 9-150a, as
863 amended by this act.

864 (g) No such depository envelope shall be opened except by order of
865 a court of competent jurisdiction, by the State Elections Enforcement
866 Commission pursuant to a subpoena issued under subdivision (1) of
867 subsection (a) of section 9-7b, as amended by this act, or within five
868 business days after an election, primary or referendum for the purpose
869 of a recanvass conducted pursuant to law. After such a recanvass the
870 depository envelopes and their contents shall be returned to the
871 municipal clerk and preserved for the stated period.

872 (h) For sixty days after the election, primary or referendum the
873 following shall be preserved by the municipal clerk as a public record
874 open to public inspection: (1) All executed absentee ballot application
875 forms and direction by registrar forms, as required by subsection (i) of
876 section 9-140, as amended by this act; (2) the list and index of applicants
877 for presidential or overseas ballots as required by section 9-158h, as
878 amended by this act; (3) the [numerical] list of unique ballot
879 identification numbers corresponding to absentee voting sets issued as
880 required by subsection (e) of section 9-140, as amended by this act; (4)
881 the list of the names of persons whose absentee ballots are received by
882 the municipal clerk, as required by subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of
883 section 9-140c, as amended by this act; (5) all unused absentee ballots;
884 and (6) all envelopes containing ballots received by the municipal clerk
885 after the close of the polls, which shall remain unopened.

886 (i) For one hundred eighty days after the election, primary or
887 referendum the following shall be preserved by the municipal clerk as a
888 public record open to public inspection: (1) The affidavit regarding the
889 municipal clerk's endorsement of [inner] return envelopes, as required
890 by subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of section 9-140c, as amended by this
891 act; and (2) the affidavit regarding delivery and receipt of ballots, as
892 required by subsection (j) of [said] section 9-140c, as amended by this
893 act.

894 Sec. 12. Section 9-153b of the general statutes is repealed and the
895 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

896 (a) If any absentee ballot applicant applies for an additional absentee
897 ballot, such applicant shall note on the application the reason for
898 applying for an additional absentee ballot and shall return the absentee
899 voting set formerly issued to such applicant before another set is issued,
900 provided, if such applicant is unable to return such formerly issued set,
901 such application for an additional ballot shall be accompanied by a
902 statement signed under the penalties of false statement in absentee
903 balloting in which such applicant shall note the reason for such
904 applicant's inability to return such formerly issued set. If such applicant
905 fails to file such a statement, no additional set shall be issued to such
906 applicant. An application for an additional absentee ballot shall only be
907 made by an absentee ballot applicant. Any additional absentee voting
908 set issued under this subsection shall only be either provided in person
909 to the applicant or mailed directly to the applicant at the bona fide
910 mailing address designated by such applicant.

911 (b) For all absentee voting sets or portions thereof returned under
912 subsection (a) of this section, the municipal clerk shall mark the [serially-
913 numbered outer] return envelope "rejected" and note the reasons for
914 rejection on all absentee ballots and envelopes so returned and shall seal
915 all such absentee voting sets or portions thereof in a package and retain
916 them in a safe place until delivered in accordance with section 9-140c, as
917 amended by this act. The municipal clerk shall keep a list of the names
918 of each absentee ballot applicant who has applied for more than one
919 absentee ballot, as provided in section 9-140, as amended by this act,
920 together with the [serial] unique ballot identification number appearing
921 on the [outer] return envelope of each absentee voting set issued to each
922 such applicant.

923 (c) If more than one absentee ballot is received from any elector, the
924 ballot of such elector last received by the municipal clerk shall be
925 counted if no absentee ballot of such elector has already been counted.
926 For all absentee ballots of such elector that are not counted, the

927 municipal clerk shall mark the [serially-numbered outer] return
928 envelopes "rejected" and note the reasons for rejection and shall deliver
929 such ballots in accordance with section 9-140c, as amended by this act.

930 Sec. 13. Section 9-153c of the general statutes is repealed and the
931 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

932 (a) If a municipal clerk has omitted the name of a candidate, party or
933 office designation, inserted an incorrect or misspelled name of a
934 candidate, party or office designation, provided an absentee ballot
935 applicant with a ballot which is not the correct ballot for [his] such
936 applicant's voting district, or incorrectly imprinted or failed to imprint
937 the designation of a state or local question on an absentee ballot in the
938 appropriate space, and if any such omission or error is likely to mislead
939 any voter, [he] the clerk shall, as soon as [he] such clerk becomes aware
940 of such omission or error, promptly mail to each applicant to whom
941 such an absentee ballot has been issued, a correct absentee ballot, the
942 necessary envelopes for its return and instructions, a statement
943 explaining the error or omission including the correct name or question
944 and a copy of this section. The municipal clerk shall inform the Secretary
945 of the State when [he] such clerk proceeds under this subsection.

946 (b) Any additional absentee voting sets issued to applicants under
947 this section shall be issued [in consecutive ascending numerical order
948 based upon the serial number appearing on the outer] bearing a unique
949 ballot identification number on the envelope for return of ballots to the
950 municipal clerk, and the clerk shall keep a record of such unique ballot
951 identification numbers by making a notation on, or attaching a
952 memorandum to, the applicant's original application for an absentee
953 ballot.

954 (c) The municipal clerk shall keep a list containing the name, address
955 and voting district of each absentee ballot applicant who has been issued
956 more than one absentee ballot under this section and the [serial] unique
957 ballot identification number appearing on the [outer] return envelope of
958 each absentee voting set so issued. The list shall be kept with the list
959 required under section 9-140, as amended by this act.

960 (d) If more than one ballot is received from an applicant who has been
961 sent a correct ballot under subsection (a) of this section, the ballot last
962 received by the municipal clerk shall be counted if no ballot of such
963 applicant has already been counted. For all ballots of such applicant that
964 are not counted, the municipal clerk shall inscribe the word "rejected"
965 and note the reasons for rejection on the [outer] return envelope and
966 shall seal them, unopened, in a package and retain them in a safe place
967 until delivered in accordance with section 9-140c, as amended by this
968 act.

969 Sec. 14. Section 9-158f of the general statutes is repealed and the
970 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

971 (a) The voter, after marking [his] such voter's presidential ballot so as
972 to express [his] such voter's choice, shall fold it so as to conceal the
973 markings, and enclose it in [an inner] a return envelope furnished by the
974 town clerk for such purpose. The envelope shall have imprinted upon
975 its back a statement which shall be signed by the voter. The failure of
976 the voter to date the statement shall not invalidate the ballot. Such
977 statement shall be substantially as follows:

978 Certification of Presidential Voter

979 I, the undersigned, do hereby state under the penalties of false
980 statement in absentee balloting that:

981 (1) I am qualified to vote for Presidential and Vice-Presidential
982 electors in the town of Connecticut, at the presidential election to be
983 held on November, 20...

984 (2) I have not applied, nor do I intend to apply, for a ballot to vote for
985 Presidential and Vice-Presidential electors at said election from any
986 other town, city, county or state, and

987 (3) I have not voted, and I will not vote otherwise than by this ballot
988 in said presidential election.

989 Dated at, this day of 20...

990 (Signature of voter)

991 (Printed name of voter)

992 (b) The overseas elector, after marking [his] such elector's overseas
993 ballot so as to express [his] such elector's choice, shall fold it so as to
994 conceal the markings and enclose it in [an inner] a return envelope
995 furnished by the town clerk for such purpose. The envelope shall have
996 imprinted upon its back a statement which shall be signed by the elector.
997 The failure of the elector to date the statement shall not invalidate the
998 ballot. The statement shall be substantially as follows:

999 Certification of Overseas Elector

1000 I, the undersigned, do hereby state under the penalties of false
1001 statement in absentee balloting that:

1002 (1) I am qualified to vote for candidates for federal office in the town
1003 of ..., Connecticut, at the federal election to be held on ..., 20...

1004 (2) I have not applied, nor do I intend to apply, for a ballot to vote for
1005 candidates for federal office at said election from any other town, city or
1006 county in Connecticut or in any other state or election district of any
1007 state or territory or any territory or possession of the United States.

1008 (3) I have not voted, and I will not vote otherwise than by this ballot
1009 in said federal election.

1010 Dated at ..., this ... day of ..., 20...

1011 (Signature of overseas elector)

1012 (Printed name of overseas elector)

1013 Sec. 15. Section 9-158g of the general statutes is repealed and the
1014 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

1015 The voter shall sign the certification upon the [inner] return envelope,
1016 [securely seal it, enclose it in an outer serially-numbered envelope]

1017 insert the completed ballot in such return envelope, which shall bear a
1018 return label displaying the unique ballot identification number both in
1019 text format and as a scannable barcode, and return it to the municipal
1020 clerk of the town in which [he] such voter is qualified to vote. The clerk
1021 shall keep it in [his] the clerk's office until delivered by [him] such clerk
1022 to the registrars of voters at the same time and in the same manner as [is
1023 provided for absentee ballots] provided in section 9-140c, as amended
1024 by this act. If the ballot is returned by a person other than the voter or
1025 the United States Postal Service, the person delivering the ballot shall
1026 sign [his] such person's name and address and indicate the date and
1027 time of [its] such ballot's delivery on the [outer] return envelope in the
1028 clerk's presence. The ballot, to be cast, shall be returned so that [it] such
1029 ballot is received by the [town] clerk not later than the close of the polls
1030 on the day of the election.

1031 Sec. 16. Section 9-158h of the general statutes is repealed and the
1032 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

1033 The clerk shall prepare and keep open to public inspection a list of all
1034 persons who have applied under sections 9-158a to 9-158m, inclusive, to
1035 vote as presidential voters or overseas electors with their names, voting
1036 addresses and application dates together with the [serial number]
1037 unique ballot identification numbers of the return envelopes issued, and
1038 shall maintain an alphabetical index of the list for a period of one
1039 hundred eighty days after the election or primary.

1040 Sec. 17. Section 9-159p of the general statutes is repealed and the
1041 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

1042 (a) Any elector may challenge the right of any person offering to vote
1043 by absentee ballot based upon false identity, disenfranchisement for
1044 conviction of a felony or lack of bona fide residence. The failure of an
1045 elector to challenge, pursuant to this section, the right of a person to vote
1046 by absentee ballot shall not bar such elector from bringing an action to
1047 contest the primary or election under section 9-323, 9-324, 9-328 or 9-
1048 329a, based on the alleged invalidity of the absentee ballot cast at such
1049 primary or election.

1050 (b) Challenges shall not be made indiscriminately and may only be
1051 made if the challenger knows or reasonably believes that the right of the
1052 person offering to vote by absentee ballot should be denied on one or
1053 more of the grounds specified in subsection (a) of this section.

1054 (c) Challenges made concerning ballots that the municipal clerk has
1055 not delivered to the registrars of voters for counting pursuant to sections
1056 9-140c, as amended by this act, and 9-147a shall be made in writing to
1057 the municipal clerk. Challenges made concerning ballots that the
1058 municipal clerk has delivered to the registrars of voters for counting
1059 pursuant to sections 9-140c, as amended by this act, and 9-147a shall be
1060 made in writing to the central counting moderator or the moderator of
1061 the polling place at which the ballot is to be counted pursuant to
1062 subsection (b) of section 9-147a. All challenges shall be made under oath.

1063 (d) Immediately upon receipt of a challenge, the municipal clerk shall
1064 send copies of the challenge to each registrar of voters and to the person
1065 offering to vote by absentee ballot. The municipal clerk shall send the
1066 copy of the challenge to the person offering to vote by first class certified
1067 mail to the mailing address shown on the application for the absentee
1068 ballot. The municipal clerk shall furnish copies of any written response
1069 to the challenge to each registrar of voters. The municipal clerk shall
1070 deliver the ballot in the [inner] return envelope, which shall not be
1071 opened, [the serially-numbered envelope] and any other evidence
1072 relevant to the challenge, to the registrars, who shall sign a receipt for
1073 the same.

1074 (e) Immediately upon receipt of a challenge, the moderator shall
1075 deliver copies of the challenge to each registrar of voters. The moderator
1076 shall also deliver, or designate another election, primary or referendum
1077 official to deliver, the ballot in the [inner] return envelope, which shall
1078 not be opened, [the serially-numbered envelope] and any other
1079 evidence relevant to the challenge to the registrars, who shall sign a
1080 receipt for the same.

1081 (f) The registrars of voters shall examine the challenge, any written
1082 response to the challenge and any other evidence or information they

1083 deem relevant to the challenge, including the [inner] return envelope,
1084 which shall not be opened, and shall determine whether the challenge
1085 should be upheld. If the registrars fail to agree that the challenge should
1086 be upheld, it shall be deemed to have been denied.

1087 (g) The registrars of voters shall make the determination not earlier
1088 than noon of the day of the election, primary or referendum at which
1089 the ballot is submitted and not later than the time when the counting of
1090 all other absentee ballots at the election, primary or referendum has
1091 been completed.

1092 (h) The registrars of voters shall notify, in writing, the municipal clerk
1093 and the central counting moderator, or the moderator of the polling
1094 place at which the ballot is to be counted pursuant to subsection (b) of
1095 section 9-147a, of their determination. If the challenge is denied, the
1096 absentee ballot shall be delivered by the registrars to the appropriate
1097 location for counting pursuant to law. If the challenge is upheld, the
1098 registrars shall mark the word "rejected" on the [serially-numbered
1099 outer] return envelope and note the reasons for rejection, and shall
1100 return it together with all other evidence received in connection with the
1101 challenge to the municipal clerk who shall retain the same until
1102 delivered in accordance with section 9-140c, as amended by this act,
1103 except that a challenge to a ballot which the municipal clerk has
1104 delivered to the registrars of voters for counting pursuant to sections 9-
1105 140c, as amended by this act, and 9-147a shall be returned to the
1106 moderator to whom the challenge was made.

1107 (i) Within five days after the election, primary or referendum the
1108 municipal clerk shall send to the person whose offer to vote was
1109 challenged a copy of the written determination of the registrars and a
1110 statement as to the disposition of the absentee ballot.

1111 Sec. 18. Subsection (g) of section 9-159q of the general statutes is
1112 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*
1113 *passage*):

1114 (g) The registrars or their designees, as the case may be, shall jointly

1115 deliver the ballots to the respective applicants at the institution and shall
1116 jointly supervise the voting of such ballots. The ballots shall be returned
1117 to the registrars or their designees by the electors in the envelopes
1118 provided and in accordance with the provisions of sections 9-137, as
1119 amended by this act, [9-139] and 9-140a, as amended by this act. If any
1120 elector asks for assistance in voting his ballot, two registrars or their
1121 designees of different political parties or, for a primary, their designees
1122 of different candidates, shall render such assistance as they deem
1123 necessary and appropriate to enable such elector to vote his ballot. The
1124 registrars or their designees may reject a ballot when (1) the elector
1125 declines to vote a ballot, or (2) the registrars or their designees are unable
1126 to determine how the elector who has requested their assistance desires
1127 to vote the ballot. When the registrars or their designees reject a ballot,
1128 they shall mark the [serially-numbered outer] return envelope "rejected"
1129 and note the reasons for rejection. Nothing in this section shall limit the
1130 right of an elector to vote his ballot in secret.

1131 Sec. 19. Subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of section 9-7b of the 2026
1132 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is
1133 substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

1134 (1) To make investigations on its own initiative or with respect to
1135 statements filed with the commission by the Secretary of the State, any
1136 town clerk or any registrar of voters or upon written complaint under
1137 oath by any individual, with respect to alleged violations of any
1138 provision of the general statutes relating to any election or referendum,
1139 any primary held pursuant to section 9-423, 9-425 or 9-464 or any
1140 primary held pursuant to a special act, and to hold hearings when the
1141 commission deems necessary to investigate violations of any provisions
1142 of the general statutes relating to any such election, primary or
1143 referendum, and for the purpose of such hearings the commission may
1144 administer oaths, examine witnesses and receive oral and documentary
1145 evidence, and shall have the power to subpoena witnesses under
1146 procedural rules the commission shall adopt, to compel their attendance
1147 and to require the production for examination of any books and papers
1148 which the commission deems relevant to any matter under investigation

1149 or in question. Until the commission determines that it is necessary to
1150 investigate a violation, commission members and staff shall keep
1151 confidential any information concerning a complaint or preliminary
1152 investigation, except upon request of the treasurer, deputy treasurer,
1153 chairperson or candidate affiliated with a committee that is the subject
1154 of the complaint or preliminary investigation. In connection with its
1155 investigation of any alleged violation of any provision of chapter 145, or
1156 of any provision of section 9-359 or section 9-359a, as amended by this
1157 act, the commission shall also have the power to subpoena any
1158 municipal clerk and to require the production for examination of any
1159 absentee ballot, [inner and outer] return envelope from which any such
1160 ballot has been removed, depository envelope containing any such
1161 ballot or [inner or outer] return envelope as provided in sections 9-150a,
1162 as amended by this act, and 9-150b, as amended by this act, and any
1163 other record, form or document as provided in section 9-150b, as
1164 amended by this act, in connection with the election, primary or
1165 referendum to which the investigation relates. In case of a refusal to
1166 comply with any subpoena issued pursuant to this subsection or to
1167 testify with respect to any matter upon which that person may be
1168 lawfully interrogated, the superior court for the judicial district of
1169 Hartford, on application of the commission, may issue an order
1170 requiring such person to comply with such subpoena and to testify;
1171 failure to obey any such order of the court may be punished by the court
1172 as a contempt thereof. In any matter under investigation which concerns
1173 the operation or inspection of or outcome recorded on any voting
1174 tabulator, the commission may issue an order to the registrars of voters
1175 to impound such tabulator until the investigation is completed;

1176 Sec. 20. Subsection (e) of section 9-23r of the general statutes is
1177 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*
1178 *passage*):

1179 (e) If an individual described in subsection (a) of this section does not
1180 submit the identification described in subsection (a) of this section as
1181 part of the individual's application for admission as an elector, and if the
1182 individual votes by absentee ballot in an election for federal office, the

1183 individual shall enclose in the [outer absentee ballot envelope, and not
1184 in the inner envelope with the ballot] additional envelope provided by
1185 the municipal clerk pursuant to section 9-140a, as amended by this act,
1186 for the return of such applicant's identification: (1) A copy of a current
1187 and valid photo identification, or (2) a copy of a current utility bill, bank
1188 statement, government check, paycheck, or other government
1189 document that shows the name and address of the voter. If an individual
1190 does not meet the requirements of this subsection in an election for
1191 federal office, such [individual's] individual's absentee ballot shall be
1192 processed in accordance with the provisions of subparagraph (A) of
1193 subdivision (2) of subsection (d) of section 9-150a, as amended by this
1194 act, and treated as a provisional ballot for federal office only, pursuant
1195 to sections 9-232i to 9-232o, inclusive.

1196 Sec. 21. Subsection (b) of section 9-311 of the 2026 supplement to the
1197 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
1198 thereof (*Effective from passage*):

1199 (b) The moderator shall determine the place or places where the
1200 recanvass shall be conducted and, if such recanvass is held before the
1201 tabulators are boxed and collected in the manner required by section 9-
1202 266, the moderator may require that such recanvass of such tabulators
1203 be conducted in each place where the tabulators are located, or the
1204 moderator may require that such tabulators be removed to one central
1205 place where such recanvass shall be conducted. All recanvassing
1206 procedures shall be open to public observation, subject to the provisions
1207 of subsection (d) of this section. Such recanvass officials shall, in the
1208 presence of such moderator and registrars of voters, make a record of
1209 the number on the seal and the number on the protective counter, if one
1210 is provided, on each voting tabulator specified by such moderator. Such
1211 registrars of voters in the presence of such moderator shall turn over the
1212 keys of each such tabulator to such recanvass officials, and such
1213 recanvass officials, in the presence of such registrars of voters and
1214 moderator, shall immediately proceed to recanvass the vote cast
1215 thereon, and shall then open the package of absentee ballots and
1216 recanvass the vote cast thereon. In the course of the recanvass of the

1217 absentee ballot vote the recanvass officials shall check all [outer] return
1218 envelopes for absentee ballots [against the inner envelopes for such
1219 ballots and] against the registry list to verify postmarks, addresses and
1220 registry list markings and also to determine whether the number of
1221 envelopes from which absentee ballots have been removed is the same
1222 as the number of persons checked as having voted by absentee ballot.
1223 The write-in ballots shall also be recanvassed at this time. Any party
1224 representative present shall have a right to view each ballot as it is being
1225 recanvassed by the recanvass officials, so as to be able to discern the
1226 markings on such ballot. All of the recanvass officials shall use the same
1227 forms for tallies and returns as were used at the original canvass and the
1228 absentee ballot counters shall also sign the tallies.

1229 Sec. 22. Section 9-359a of the general statutes is repealed and the
1230 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

1231 (a) A person is guilty of false statement in absentee balloting when
1232 [he] such person intentionally makes a false written statement in or on,
1233 or signs the name of another person to, the application for an absentee
1234 ballot or the [inner] return envelope accompanying any such ballot,
1235 which [he] such person does not believe to be true and which statement
1236 or signature is intended to mislead a public servant in the performance
1237 of [his] such public servant's official function.

1238 (b) False statement in absentee balloting is a class D felony.

1239 Sec. 23. Subparagraph (B) of subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of
1240 section 9-369b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is
1241 substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

1242 (B) Each such explanatory text shall be prepared by the municipal
1243 clerk and shall specify the intent and purpose of each such proposal or
1244 question. Such explanatory text shall not advocate either the approval
1245 or disapproval of the proposal or question. The municipal clerk shall
1246 cause such question or proposal and such explanatory text to be printed
1247 in sufficient supply for public dissemination and shall also provide for
1248 the printing of such explanations of proposals or questions on posters

1249 of a size to be determined by said clerk. At least three such posters shall
 1250 be posted at each polling place at which electors will be voting on such
 1251 proposals or questions. Any posters printed in excess of the number
 1252 required by this section to be posted may be displayed by said clerk at
 1253 the clerk's discretion at locations which are frequented by the public.
 1254 The explanatory text shall also be furnished to each absentee ballot
 1255 applicant pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (d) of section 9-140,
 1256 as amended by this act. Each such explanatory text shall be subject to
 1257 the approval of the municipal attorney.

1258 Sec. 24. Sections 9-139 and 9-159o of the general statutes are repealed.
 1259 (*Effective from passage*)

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	9-135
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	9-137
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	9-139a
Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	9-140
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	9-140a
Sec. 6	<i>from passage</i>	9-140b
Sec. 7	<i>from passage</i>	9-140c
Sec. 8	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>from passage</i>	9-140e
Sec. 10	<i>from passage</i>	9-150a
Sec. 11	<i>from passage</i>	9-150b(e) to (i)
Sec. 12	<i>from passage</i>	9-153b
Sec. 13	<i>from passage</i>	9-153c
Sec. 14	<i>from passage</i>	9-158f
Sec. 15	<i>from passage</i>	9-158g
Sec. 16	<i>from passage</i>	9-158h
Sec. 17	<i>from passage</i>	9-159p
Sec. 18	<i>from passage</i>	9-159q(g)
Sec. 19	<i>from passage</i>	9-7b(a)(1)
Sec. 20	<i>from passage</i>	9-23r(e)
Sec. 21	<i>from passage</i>	9-311(b)
Sec. 22	<i>from passage</i>	9-359a
Sec. 23	<i>from passage</i>	9-369b(a)(1)(B)
Sec. 24	<i>from passage</i>	Repealer section

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 4(d)(1)(C) and (D), "its" was changed to "[its] the ballot's" for clarity; in Section 9(b), "state, and (5)" was changed to "state, or (5)" for accuracy and "Pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section" was deleted for clarity; and in Section 9(c), "beginning the day" was changed to "on and after the day" for consistency with standard drafting conventions.

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 \$	FY 29 \$
Secretary of the State	GF - Cost	1.55 million to 1.7 million	136,000 to 254,000	146,000 to 286,000
Secretary of the State	GF - Potential Savings	70,000 to 150,000	60,000 to 125,000	70,000 to 150,000
Elections Enforcement Commission	GF - Cost	68,000	87,500	87,500
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹	GF - Cost	27,000	36,000	36,000

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$	FY 29 \$
All Municipalities	Cost	822,000 to 2.5 million	650,000 to 1.9 million	770,000 to 2.3 million
All Municipalities	Cost	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal

Explanation

The bill authorizes all eligible voters to apply for and participate in elections via absentee voting, and alters existing absentee ballot provisions, among other changes, beginning in FY 27. The bill results in General Fund costs of approximately \$1.65 million to \$1.8 million in FY

¹The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 41.82% of payroll in FY 27.

27, \$259,500 to \$377,500 in FY 28, and \$269,500 to \$409,500 in FY 29. There are additionally General Fund savings anticipated of approximately \$60,000 to \$150,000 annually beginning in FY 27.

The bill also results in an aggregate total cost to municipalities of \$822,000 to \$2.5 million in FY 27, \$650,000 to \$1.9 million in FY 28, and \$770,000 to \$2.3 million in FY 29. Costs continue in the out years.

State Fiscal Impacts

The bill's state costs are primarily to the Secretary of the State (SOTS), with SOTS costs totaling approximately \$1.55 million to \$1.7 million in FY 27, \$136,000 to \$254,000 in FY 28, and \$146,000 to \$286,000 in FY 29, with costs continuing into the out years. These costs are associated with supporting the anticipated increase in absentee voting,² reprinting current forms, updating the current ballot tracking system, and a public awareness mailing, as described below.

The bill additionally results in aggregate savings to the state of \$70,000 to \$150,000 in FY 27, \$60,000 to \$125,000 in FY 28, and \$70,000 to \$150,000 in FY 29, with ongoing savings in the out years. This savings is associated with the elimination of the absentee ballot outer envelope.

The total state costs and savings may vary from the ranges provided above if absentee voting participation is significantly higher or lower than projected.

Expanded Absentee Voting. The bill's expanded absentee voting provisions (Section 1) result in a cost to the state of \$292,000 to \$433,000 in FY 27, \$184,500 to \$302,500 in FY 28, and \$194,500 to \$334,500 in FY 29, with costs continuing in the out years. The majority of these costs are

² This estimate assumes: (1) on the lower end, an increase of 10% of the participating electorate shifting to absentee voting in each town in response to the legislation; and (2) on the higher end, a shift in line with Massachusetts patterns (ranging from 24.7% to 30.9%) depending on a town's number of registered voters.

to SOTS, associated with providing additional forms.³

SOTS will need to print additional absentee ballot materials to support the expected increase in absentee voting participation, resulting in a cost of \$72,000 to \$213,000 in FY 27, \$61,000 to \$179,000 in FY 28, and \$71,000 to \$211,000 in FY 29, with costs continuing in the out years. This cost is expected to vary annually depending on the number of electors who choose to participate via absentee ballot and the types of elections held.

The bill allows an elector to choose to permanently participate via absentee voting (Section 9), beginning in FY 27. This provision may increase the SOTS absentee ballot materials costs beyond the estimates described above. The extent of the cost increase depends on the number of electors who choose this option but in the absence of the provision, would not have opted for absentee voting for every election.

In FY 27, there is a one-time cost of \$125,000 to SOTS to reprint approximately 1.35 million forms. Reprinting is necessary to remove existing references to the requirement to provide an excuse to participate via absentee voting.

The expansion of absentee voting also results in a cost to the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) of \$68,000⁴ and one position⁵ in FY 27, with an associated fringe cost of \$27,000, before increasing to an annual salary of \$86,000 beginning in FY 28, with ongoing other expenses of \$1,500 and an associated fringe cost of \$36,000. The position is necessary because the bill's expansion of absentee voting is anticipated to result in an increase in SEEC investigations.

Absentee Voting Ballot Tracking. The bill requires SOTS to develop

³ Expanded absentee voting, excluding the public information campaign and ballot tracking, results in costs to SOTS of \$197,000 to \$338,000 in FY 27, \$61,000 to \$179,000 in FY 28, and \$71,000 to \$211,000 in FY 29.

⁴ This represents 0.75 FTE in FY 27. Costs include a salary of \$64,500 and other expenses of \$3,500.

⁵ The position is a Legal Investigator.

and install ballot-tracking software (Section 8), resulting in an annual cost of approximately \$75,000 beginning in FY 27. This estimate is based on a private vendor cost from another state. If SOTS chooses to integrate the United States Postal Service (USPS) tracking into the state's Centralized Voter Registration System (CVRS), costs may vary.

Absentee Voting and the Elimination of the Outer Envelope. The bill eliminates the requirement for a second envelope to be used by electors participating via absentee voting (Section 2), resulting in savings to SOTS of \$70,000 to \$150,000⁶ in FY 27, \$60,000 to \$125,000 in FY 28, and \$70,000 to \$150,000 in FY 29, with savings continued into the out years. The exact savings will depend on the number of electors who choose to participate via absentee voting.

Public Awareness Mailing. The bill requires SOTS to conduct a statewide public awareness mailing to educate the public regarding the bill's absentee voting provisions (Section 9). This results in a one-time cost to SOTS of \$1.3 million⁷ in FY 27.

Municipal Fiscal Impacts

The bill results in an estimated total cost⁸ to municipalities of \$822,000 to \$2.5 million in FY 27,⁹ \$650,000 to \$1.9 million in FY 28,¹⁰ and \$770,000 to \$2.3 million in FY 29,¹¹ with costs continuing in the out years. These costs are primarily associated with the additional labor and materials

⁶ This estimate assumes: (1) on the lower end, an increase of 10% of the participating electorate shifting to absentee voting in each town in response to the legislation; and (2) on the higher end, a shift in line with Massachusetts patterns (ranging from 24.7% to 30.9%) depending on a town's number of registered voters.

⁷ This figure is based on the USPS standard media mail rate. This cost also includes the initial printing of the mailing, postage, and printing additional copies for town clerks to include with absentee ballot applications.

⁸ This estimate was calculated using vote by mail town costs from the [Massachusetts certified cost data](#). The Massachusetts cost data comes from the 2024 election and has been adjusted to account for size, participation, and voting patterns within each town in Connecticut.

⁹ FY 27 includes the 2026 State Election Primary and the 2026 State Election.

¹⁰ FY 28 includes the 2027 Municipal Primary, 2027 Municipal Election and the 2028 Presidential Preference Primary.

¹¹ FY 29 includes the 2028 State Election Primary and the 2028 Presidential Election.

required to support the expected increase in absentee voting. The statewide total municipal costs may vary from the ranges provided above if absentee voting participation is significantly higher or lower than projected.

Expanded Absentee Voting. The bill's expanded absentee voting provisions (Section 1) result in a cost to municipalities of \$800,000 to \$2.5 million in FY 27, \$650,000 to \$1.9 million in FY 28, and \$770,000 to \$2.3 million in FY 29, with costs continuing in the out years. This cost is associated with the additional labor, storage, printing, and postage needed to facilitate and process additional absentee ballots.¹² The estimate is based on municipal costs incurred in Massachusetts under a similar policy, applied to Connecticut towns with comparable electorates.

The exact cost will vary substantially by town, depending on the number of registered voters, as well as on election participation and absentee-voting rates. Towns with smaller numbers¹³ of registered voters will generally see a significantly lower cost than towns with higher numbers¹⁴ of registered voters.

Absentee Voting and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). As part of the absentee voting changes, the bill additionally requires municipalities to provide a secondary envelope, and, optionally, prepaid postage to support ballot access for certain electors (Section 5), resulting in a statewide cost of up to \$22,000 in FY 27 (if municipalities choose to prepay postage). Connecticut has an estimated 31,570 electors who have not previously complied with HAVA requirements to provide required identification to participate in federal elections. The

¹² This estimate assumes: (1) on the lower end, an increase of 10% of the participating electorate shifting to absentee voting in each town in response to the legislation; and (2) on the higher end, a shift in line with Massachusetts patterns (ranging from 24.7% to 30.9%) depending on a town's number of registered voters.

¹³ Towns with fewer than 5,000 registered voters are expected to see a cost increase of \$500 to \$1,300 in FY 27, \$500 to \$1,100 in FY 28, and \$500 to \$1,200 in FY 29.

¹⁴ Towns with greater than 50,000 registered voters are expected to see a cost increase of \$21,000 to \$59,000 in FY 27, \$15,000 to \$43,000 in FY 28, and \$22,000 to \$63,000 in FY 29.

exact cost will vary by town and depend on the number of such voters who choose to participate by absentee ballot.

The Out Years

State Impact:

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact above will continue into the future subject to inflation and the number of electors who participate via absentee.

Municipal Impact:

Costs in the out years will vary depending on: (1) the annual number and types of elections conducted; (2) the proportion of the electorate who newly decide to participate via absentee voting; and (3) inflation in postage and labor costs.

OLR Bill Analysis**sSB 491*****AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING.*****SUMMARY**

This bill expands absentee voting to all eligible voters who will not appear at their designated polling place on the day of an election, primary, or referendum (election contest), instead of just to voters who had a specified reason (§ 1).

The bill also requires the secretary of the state (SOTS) to develop and install absentee ballot-tracking software that is integrated with the Centralized Voter Registration System (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 (§ 8).

The bill also makes several changes to the absentee balloting procedures, including the following:

1. implements use of a singular “return envelope” for ballot return and in doing so combines the inner and outer envelopes used under current law, and makes corresponding changes;
2. replaces the required serial numbers on the envelope with unique ballot identification numbers, and makes corresponding changes;
3. eliminates the prohibition on misrepresenting absentee ballot eligibility requirements to any elector or prospective applicant (§ 1);

4. amends the information that Department of Correction (DOC) employees must provide on absentee ballot applications for incarcerated applicants they assist (§ 4);
5. adjusts requirements for certain entities that send out unsolicited absentee ballot applications (§ 4);
6. modifies how absentee ballots are cast and collected (§ 6);
7. creates procedures for voters to cure certain rejected absentee ballots (§ 7);
8. modifies certain deadlines for delivering absentee ballots to town clerks and when absentee ballot counters must report to the counting location (§§ 7 & 10);
9. extends permanent absentee voting eligibility to all eligible voters (§ 9);
10. expands the ways in which a person's permanent absentee ballot status loses effect and correspondingly eliminates the registrar's annual verification requirement (§ 9); and
11. requires voters, including those overseas, casting presidential ballots to print their name on the return envelope in addition to signing it as under current law (§ 14).

The bill also requires SOTS to create and conduct a statewide mailing, as soon as possible after the bill is enacted, to inform all voters of the changes to the state's absentee balloting and permanent absentee ballot status eligibility laws. SOTS must also make the mailing materials available to town clerks and, once provided, the clerks must include them with all absentee ballot applications that they distribute in 2026 (§ 9).

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

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.

ABSENTEE BALLOT MATERIALS

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). Further, the bill 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 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 identification number (see below);
5. a notice regarding 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 the voter is required by federal law 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 identification 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.

Ballot Identification Numbers

Regarding 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

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, candidates, parties, and political committees (or candidates' or committees' agents) may 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 expands these requirements by (1) applying them to delivered ballots, in addition to mailed ballots, and (2) requiring a disclaimer noting the individual or committee that paid for the mailing or delivery. If the mailing or delivery was paid for by a candidate, the disclaimer must also note that the candidate approved it. Additionally, the bill eliminates the requirement under current law for the mailing to explain the eligibility criteria and warn the person that voting by absentee ballot without being eligible may result in civil or criminal penalties. Instead, it requires a written explanation of the options for returning absentee ballots under state law.

§ 4 — ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS FOR INCARCERATED VOTERS

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 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.

§§ 6 & 24 — RETURN OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS

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.

§ 7 — ABSENTEE BALLOT CURING

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.

§§ 7 & 10 — ABSENTEE BALLOT PROCESSING

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	7:00 am
Primary		
Referendum	12:00 pm or a mutually agreed upon time before 8:00 pm	7:00 am or a mutually agreed upon time before 4:00 pm
Special election or referendum	As above for regular contests	

State law also, unchanged by the bill, 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 immediately when the polls open on election day, instead of at the time the registrar designates as under current law.

§ 9 — PERMANENT ABSENTEE VOTING

State law allows certain voters to request that registrars automatically send an absentee ballot to them for each election they are eligible for. The bill allows any eligible voter to request permanent absentee ballot status, instead of just voters who are permanently physically disabled or suffering from a long-term illness.

Current law also requires that registrars annually verify that each permanent absentee ballot voter still resides at their address by sending them a written notice. Electors may lose permanent absentee ballot status if (1) they are removed from the municipality's registration list, (2) the notice is returned undeliverable, or (3) the voter requests removal.

The bill eliminates the notice requirement and the related reason for

removal and instead additionally requires a voter be removed for other specified reasons, including if the ballot 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 of 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 of 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 must also be removed from the permanent absentee ballot list if 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. The bill also requires removal if SOTS or the applicable registrar receives information from an out-of-state admitting official that the voter has registered to vote there.

Similarly, a voter may also be removed if the applicable registrar receives certain information that the voter moved out of state. Specifically, the information must come from another state or the federal government as part of an agreement to share information to help mutually update voter registration systems.

BACKGROUND

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).

Related Bills

sSB 495, reported favorably by the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee, restricts persons with certain convictions from distributing absentee ballot applications.

sHB 5001, reported favorably by the GAE Committee, among other things, includes identical provisions as this bill.

HB 5530, reported favorably by the GAE Committee, requires a study of absentee ballot access in unconsolidated cities and boroughs within a town.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 13 Nay 5 (03/20/2026)