



CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee

March 11, 2011 Public Hearing

Testimony Submitted by Christine S. Horrigan, Vice President of Public Issues

Support for:

HB 6163 AAC AN AGREEMENT AMONG THE STATES TO ELECT THE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES BY NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

SB 806 AA REQUIRING THE PUBLIC POSTING OF BUDGET BILLS
PRIOR TO ANY VOTE

HB 5454 AAC THE UNIFORM MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS ACT

Opposition to:

SB 804 AAC RECURRING POST-ELECTION AUDITS

HB 5727 AAC POST-ELECTION AUDIT PROCEDURES

SB 753 AAC ON-LINE VOTING FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL
STATIONED OUT OF STATE

HB 6044 AAC AUDITS CONDUCTED BY THE
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

SJ 16 RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE CURRENT ELECTORAL
COLLEGE SYSTEM AS THE BEST WAY TO ELECT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut, a statewide organization with nearly 2000 members, thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the many bills before the Committee today.

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

The League of Women Voters believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. We believe, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. In the meantime, we support the use of

the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished. Accordingly, the League **supports HB 6163—An Agreement Among the States to Elect the President of the United States by National Popular Vote—and opposes SJ 16—Resolution Recognizing the Current Electoral College System as the Best Way to Elect the President of the United States.**

The National Popular Vote bill would guarantee the presidency to the winner of the popular vote in all 50 states. It replaces the “winner-take-all” rule with a system based on the concept of “one person, one vote.” While preserving the Electoral College, it ensures that **every vote is equal and every vote matters in a presidential election.** Please vote YES on HB 6163 and NO on SJ 16.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/OPEN GOVERNMENT

The League supports continued improvement in the procedures of the General Assembly, particularly measures designed to encourage openness and transparency in the legislative process. In the past, legislation has often been passed without adequate opportunities for the public and even legislators themselves to adequately review and comment upon the proposed bills. We are all familiar with the concept of last minute “rats” finding their way into proposed bills. For these reasons, the League **strongly supports SB 806—AA Requiring the Public Posting of Budget Bills Prior to Any Vote—** as an important first step in bringing greater transparency to the legislative process. SB 806 would require any appropriation or revenue-related bill to be posted on the General Assembly’s website at least seventy-two hours prior to any hearing or vote by any joint standing committee or by the House of Representatives or Senate. The League believes the 72-hour posting period will allow for ample public review and comment on legislation which will go before committees and the General Assembly and overall encourages transparency and deliberation relating to the government’s fiscal proposals. Please vote YES on SB 806.

POST ELECTION AUDITS

The League believes that voting systems must be secure, accurate, recountable and accessible. The League **strongly opposes both SB 804—An Act Concerning Recurring Post-Election Audits—and HB 5727—An Act Concerning Post-Election Audit Procedures.** These bills would exempt municipalities from post-election audits under certain circumstances.

Connecticut’s current law requires officials to perform post-election audits of machine-counted ballots in a randomly selected 10% of the state’s voting districts after each election. The purpose of this law is to assure the integrity of our elections, to reassure voters as to the accuracy of election results, and to safeguard our elections against programming errors, malfeasance, machine malfunction, tampering and fraud. The League is an active member of the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition and believes that, instead of weakening existing laws, the legislature should make our state’s post-election audit procedures more transparent, consistent, and reliable.

Enactment of either SB 804 or HB 5727 could be devastating to voter confidence and to the security of our elections. First, exempting a municipality for any reason from the random selection process negates the value and purpose of an audit. Second, the “brains” of our voting machines—computer memory cards—are newly programmed before every election by computer programmers working for a private, out-of-state company. The same caveat provided for our families’ financial investments is also true for our voting machines, “Past performance is no guarantee of future results.” We must treat each election as a discrete audit opportunity. Third, exempting any municipality from consecutive years of auditing—with no verification of election results—provides a perfect opportunity for a hacker to target that community, knowing there would be no inquiry into its election results in subsequent years.

The ability to audit and recount the voter’s original documentation—the paper ballot—was why we chose our current voting technology in the first place. We urge you to oppose both of these bills.

ON-LINE VOTING

The League *also opposes SB 753—An Act Concerning On-Line Voting for Military Personnel Stationed out of State*. Nothing should be more secure, private, and sacrosanct than the ballots cast by those in active service to our country. Unfortunately, today’s Internet does not yet provide adequate safeguards for online voting. The 2010 debacle that occurred when Washington, DC tested its online voting project demonstrates that online voting has serious security flaws which can jeopardize the privacy of voters’ personal identification information and allow tampering with their votes. (For more information, please go to: <http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/politics/Test-Hackers-Crack-DC-Internet-Voting-System.html>) The Internet is an effective tool for e-mailing applications and ballots to those in the armed services, but is not yet secure enough for transmitting completed ballots to local officials. The League supports the MOVE Act (HB 5454) which removes many of the barriers to voting experienced by military service people and their families, but believes that the security and privacy vulnerabilities in online voting must be resolved before jeopardizing the votes of those who are putting their own safety on the line for our country.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The League believes that campaign finance systems should ensure the public’s right to know and combat corruption and undue influence. Critical to these goals is the ability to police and enforce the rules through audits and investigations. The League *strongly opposes HB 6044—AAC Audits Conducted by the State Elections Enforcement Commission*—which would “exempt from audits any candidate who does not accept public campaign financing and spends less than the public financing threshold for his or her race.” Audits assure the integrity of our elections and discourage corruption and undue influence. Candidates should not be able to “buy” their way out of audits by forgoing public money. Please vote NO on HB 6044.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment upon these important bills.

League of Women Voters of Connecticut · 1890 Dixwell Avenue Hamden, CT 06514 · 203/288-7996