H.B. 6428 – Oppose – Should Require State Certification and Procedures in Law

Government Administration and Elections Committee

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Chairs and members of the Committee, my name is Luther Weeks, Executive Director of CTVotersCount, a Certified Moderator, and a Computer Scientist.

This bill, as I understand it, is intended to allow Registrars of Voters in any town to employ electronic check-in of voters on election day.

In general, I support the concept of electronic check-in. I do not support this H.B. 6428 as it does not impose any requirements or standards with regard to the capabilities, reliability, accuracy, and integrity of electronic check-in systems nor associated manual processes in support of electronic check-in.

Most systems we use are certified in some way:

- When states, counties, or municipalities purchase voting machines, they are certified by the state. States often also require or accept Federal certification.
- When Connecticut chose electronic voting systems in 2005-2007, Secretary of the State, Susan Bysiewicz chose federally certified voting systems for evaluation, held public demonstrations of those systems around the state, surveyed the opinions of voters using those systems, followed by focus groups of Registrars, Persons with Disabilities, and Technologists. The result was an effective, uniform system in use everywhere in the State. Our current system is not perfect, but a far cry from the chaos that would exist if each town were responsible for evaluating and purchasing their own individual systems from vendors.
- Last year this Committee was concerned, appropriately, that the SOTS take care that online registration be tested, secure, and accurate.
- When towns purchase a vehicle, it meets certain standards that indicate it is roadworthy and the model has been tested.

However, for pollbooks there are no such standards established, no recognized testing authority.

Selecting and using electronic check-in poses many of the same challenges associated with purchasing voting systems, along with some differences which make it less challenging and others which make it more necessary that state certification or approval be required.

Currently there are no Federal standards or certification of electronic check-in systems. Without such standards the evaluation of such systems falls entirely on the state, or as proposed in this bill, to each individual town’s registrars, few of whom are capable of or funded for evaluating, testing, and developing implementation plans.

As I understand it, this law would allow anything “electronic” to be used as a check-in system, such as a word processor, spreadsheet, or a system written by a registrar, their brother-in-law, or niece etc. Any electronic check-in system should be approved and certified by the Secretary of the State.
Check-in systems should serve voters and officials:

- Many of the benefits of electronic pollbooks comes from the ability to download voter lists and upload check-in results automatically to a Centralized Voter Registration System (CVRS). Any system purchased should be approved by the Secretary of the State as compatible with and safe to connect to our CVRS. The Secretary should also negotiate with check-in systems vendors and CVRS vendors to keep their systems compatible in the future.

- Long run benefits would be obtained by systems that can be networked within a polling place, connecting with the state CVRS such that Election Day Registration and cross-checking of voters can be immediate. This function would almost be a prerequisite for regional or multiple early voting centers in the same municipality.

- Such systems should be tested for ergonomics and performance with a variety of individuals doing the checking, including younger, older, and typical pollworkers. The number of registered and expected voters which can be accommodated by each check-in line should be evaluated so that officials can plan to effectively serve voters.

- According to researchers at the recent NIST Future of Voting Conference, there is a lack of information on the efficiency of electronic pollbooks vs. paper pollbooks, especially with older poll workers. [http://tinyurl.com/nistdzy1](http://tinyurl.com/nistdzy1) (1:26-1:28 into part 1)

There are no standards/requirements for check-in systems in this law. Standards should include:

- Assurance that such systems do not lose information on checked-in voters in cases of power, computer, or software failures

- Assurance that such systems create a permanent record of checked-in voters and other activities that can be made available to the public, as they can today with paper check-in books.

- Assurance that such systems record all instances where a voter was checked-in and a pollworker later unchecked that voter.

- A way to record that apparently the wrong voter name was checked, when later the correct voter attempts to vote and is allowed to vote.

- How will the system account for absentee voters from the town clerk? Systems must record when a voter withdraws their absentee ballot before 10:00am and votes in person,

- The ability to assure that the same voter is not checked-in in multiple check-in lines.

- The ability to rapidly expand to additional check-in lines to reduce long lines.

There should also be standard procedures for the loading, testing and use of electronic pollbooks. Especially emergency procedures for power, hardware, or software failure that allow voting to continue and a complete, unified check-in record created.


Considering the lower quantities in most Connecticut municipalities and the need for extra equipment required to be available for opening extra lines, costs for just the hardware may well exceed $1,000 per planned check-in line.

Thank You