

S.B. 898 – Oppose Some Provisions

**Government Administration and Elections Committee
Testimony – March 6, 2017**

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

S.B. 898 would make several changes to election administration and to voting.

The Citizen Audit supports one provision:

Lines 86-90 requiring the permanent posting of declaratory rulings, opinions, and regulations by the Secretary of the State on the web.

The Citizen Audit opposes one provisions as currently written:

Lines 131-132 require that random audit drawings be held within 72 hours of the election. We agree that a deadline should be set for the random drawing which has often occurred very late in the process, causing problems for election officials and the public. However, vote counting does not complete until 48 hours after the election. The drawing should be held sometime after all results are reported to the Secretary of the State and available for public review on the Secretary's election reporting system. Also, the random drawing should have a required advanced notification. See our testimony on S.B. 540. We suggest the following substitute language:

“and take place not later than the 8th day after any election or primary and be noticed to the public by press release at least three business days in advance.”

The Citizen Audit completely opposes one provision:

Lines 149-156 would remove the requirement that the Secretary of the State consult with the University of Connecticut for the approval of electronic pollbooks. Was this proposed because Prof. Shvartsman of UConn has tested several available electronic pollbooks and found them all lacking? (Ref: Video of NH Forum on Electronic Pollbooks, on May 10, 2016 at 30min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtYJkVNIGMA> or as covered by the Manchester Union Leader: <http://ctvoterscount.org/CTVCdata/16/05/UnionLeader20160511.pdf>)

I personally oppose one other provision:

Sections 8 and 9 preclude voters who register after petitions become available from being counted for the petition. This would reduce ballot access for petitioning primary candidates. It would reduce participation and preclude a standard practice that results in more eligible voters registering.

It is normal and vital to success for petitioning candidates and their supporters to approach citizens that are unaffiliated and ask them to sign the petition by simultaneously reregistering in the candidate's party – this change would preclude that. They also approach eligible citizens to encourage them to sign the petition and simultaneously register for the first time – this change would preclude that.

As an election official, I am sympathetic to the wish of Registrars to make their jobs simpler. Yet, my sympathy ends when it results in barriers to participation in democracy for candidates and citizens.

Thank you,