

Post 2015 Legislative Update

**Certification & Ongoing Training:**

P.A. 15-224 supports registrars by formally establishing opportunities for education and training. Registrars will still have a role on the training advisory committee which advises on curriculum.

* All registrars are now required to become certified. These courses will be offered through the UCONN business school’s Connecticut Information Technology Institute (<http://citi.uconn.edu/>). Participants will be able to go to one of the UCONN branch campuses to attend in person or use the distance learning service.
* The curriculum for the certification has been developed by the training advisory committee.
* Registrars will complete certification within their first term, or if they have a four year term, they shall complete certification within the first two years.
* Because certification is a requirement of your service, the town is required to pay the cost of tuition, which we estimate to be approximately $1,600 per registrar.
* Deputy and assistant registrars are not required to be certified, but they are eligible to take the courses if they so choose.
* A minimum of 8 hours of annual training will be required to keep certification current.
The Secretary of the State will determine what training counts toward the fulfilling this requirement.
* For example, if the agency’s pending bonding requests are awarded the Secretary may require participation in a training led by the vendor on electronic poll-books. Such training could count toward the total if the Secretary approves.

**Issuing Instructions**

Historically, there has been a lack of clarity regarding the respective roles of the Secretary and local election officials.

P.A. 15-224 clarifies the role of the Secretary as the chief election official, but also requires that any written instruction be labeled as such and cite the authority on which it is based. These changes should promote uniformity in carrying out election laws around the state.

**Expedited Investigations, Temporary or Permanent Removal**

* Complaints referred by the Secretary to the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) that involve election administrators will be required to be investigated and resolved in an expedited manner. SEEC will have 30 days to make a determination to investigate and 90 days to complete an investigation and make a decision.
* P.A. 15-224 creates a process in limited circumstances for a registrar to be temporarily relieved of duties.
* Temporary relief of duties may also be issued by the Secretary when (1) the registrar fails to complete or maintain certification or (2) the registrar is the subject of an investigation related to their duties.
* Prior to temporary relief of duty, a meeting will be conducted to evaluate the circumstances and determine if temporary relief of duties is recommended.
* The town may continue to pay the salary of the registrar.
* This measure is designed to be short term. It would end upon the completion of the investigation (SEEC required to complete by 90 days), or the completion of the certification process.
* A permanent removal process was established for the most extraordinary of circumstances.
* The removal of an elected official is never something to be taken lightly, and the process in the bill recognizes this by including several layers of review. While seldom used, town charters, state and federal laws and constitutions address the process for removing various officials if necessary.

The process for permanent removal of a registrar includes the following steps:

* The Secretary of the State files a statement initiating an investigation into the potential removal of a registrar. Such a complaint must allege that the individual registrar engaged in misconduct, willful and material neglect of duty or incompetence in the conduct of the office. *Only the Secretary of the State may file a complaint of this nature.*
* SEEC investigates and makes a determination of whether they recommend removal. They present their findings to the Attorney General within 30 days.
* The Attorney General reviews the findings of the investigation and statues to determine if the case will be pursued.
* If they case goes forward, the Attorney General will bring the matter before a Superior Court judge, who, after a hearing, would make the final decision.

**Changes to Process of Reporting Results:**

* Candidate totals will be required on election night as preliminary vote totals.
* Turn-out percentages will no longer be required on election night, but must be submitted to the Secretary within 48 hours.
* The moderator has until 1 pm on the Friday following the election to work with the clerk to identify/correct any errors in the return and report the results to the Secretary.
* Moderators now must correct any errors and file an amended return no later than 3 days, instead of 14 days.

**Voter Registration Deadlines & Election Day Registration:**

* The deadline to register to vote in a general election shall be 1 week prior to Election Day.
* This deadline applies to all methods of voter registration (online, in-person, by mail).
* Online voter registration tool may be used for the purposes of Election Day Registration.

**Regional Election Monitor**

S.B. 1502 (section 451) (passed June 29) requires that the state’s 9 council of governments include a regional election monitor.
The role of this person is to assist local election officials in preparing the elections.

The individual is trained by, reports to and takes direction from the Secretary of the State.

**Changes Effecting Candidates in State Election Year**

* Current law requires that the General Assembly candidate of a major party running in either a general election or primary must reside in the district where they seek office.
* This requirement now applies to minor party candidates, petitioning candidates, and write-in candidates.
* Endorsement forms for state reps with single town districts, judges of probate and registrar of voters will now be filed at the Secretary of the State.
* Endorsement form will now only 1 signature. That signature can be the chairperson or presiding officer or secretary of the convention.
* P.A. 15-224 requires that municipalities send notification of any primary taking place in a state election to the Secretary of the State.

**Changes Effecting Candidates in Municipal Election Years**

* Major party candidates nominated for municipal office must now sign the endorsement form.
* Municipal candidates may choose how their name appears on the ballot.
* P.A. 15-224 requires that municipalities send notification of any primary taking place in a state election to the Secretary of the State.

**Changes Affecting Polling Places:**

* 16 & 17 year olds are permitted to serve as ballot clerks
* The Secretary shall prescribe a posting to be displayed at check-in area that sets out identification rules.

**Post Election Audits:**

* Enables automated system of scanners to be used to perform post-election audits.
* Bonding proposal for the purchase of several scanners is currently pending.