

Senate Election Law and Internal Affairs Committee

Kelly Flathers 271-3093

SB 108, relative to absentee ballot applications.

Hearing Date: February 7, 2017

Time Opened: 9:23 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:33 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Birdsell, Soucy and Woodburn

Members of the Committee Absent: Senators Gray and Sanborn

Bill Analysis: This bill provides absentee ballot applicants with the option to provide a phone number and an email address.

Sponsors:

Sen. Soucy

Sen. Lasky

Rep. Cote

Rep. M. MacKay

Rep. O'Brien

Rep. LeBrun

Who supports the bill: Sen. Bette Lasky - District 13; Patricia Piecuch - City of Nashua / NH City & Town Clerks Association; David Scanlan - Deputy Secretary of State; Darryl W. Perry - Liberty Lobby LLC

Who opposes the bill: No one

Who is neutral on the bill: No one

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Donna Soucy – District 18

- This bill provides the Clerk with an additional tool to process absentee ballots by providing an optional field for voters to include their telephone number and email address.
- There are many issues that arise that could easily be resolved if the Clerk was able to get in contact with the individual affected.
- Regarding confidentiality, the application is exempt under the Right to Know law. Election officials prepare some information to be released but it is pulled specifically from the list.

Sen. Birdsell

- (Q) Last year we passed a bill that allowed the Secretary of State to present information to candidates and party members. Is there an amendment you

would be willing to put forward that would not allow this information to be released?

- (A) **Sen. Birdsell:** Yes, we could discuss that. This legislation would not put voter contact information on that list and it is optional for voters to include.

Patricia Piecuch – City of Nashua / NH City & Town Clerks Association

- I am speaking in support of this bill.
- We reached out to Sen. Soucy to sponsor this bill for us. After the last presidential election, the executive board met and we talked about problems we had with applications.
- We have up to 7 days to reject an absentee application that we can't certify. We try to get these turned around in the same day, but it's difficult to do that when you're getting hundreds of absentee ballots on a daily basis.
- I had my staff look up phone numbers, but a lot of people don't have landlines anymore. We need to be able to contact voters faster.
- If individuals move within the city, we can't certify that unless they register in person. Sometimes we can't read addresses and have to Google them to make sure we're mailing the ballots to the right place. Sometimes faxes don't come in properly and we're missing information.
- One of the main problems is when individuals in the same household have the same first and last name with a different middle name or a different suffix. We cannot certify who that is.
- The information that candidates and parties receive in the absentee report is much less than what they would receive if they came into our office. The information provided through the state is different than the information provided through cities and towns.
- These applications are protected under the right-to-know law. They would be available during a recount, however. I spoke with Deputy Secretary of State David Scanlan and we could redact contact information on the application in the event of a recount.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None

Neutral Information Presented: None

Future Action: Pending

KEF

Date Hearing Report completed: February 7, 2017