

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7208  
**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING REFERENDA ON THE SALE OF MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES OR OTHER ASSETS OR THE PRIVATIZATION OF MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT SERVICES OR FUNCTIONS.  
**Vote Date:** 3/19/2025  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 3/14/2025  
**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee:

### REASONS FOR BILL:

There has been a growing concern over the power local municipalities have to overrule the opinions of the municipality in the sale of municipal assets and services. The City of Ansonia in 2024 controversially sold its Water Pollution Control Authority despite significant public opposition. This bill would seek to address these concerns by proposing the ability to have a referendum, by way of petition, to allow the constituents to voice their input on if a municipal authority should be permitted to sell off said municipal assets.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language changes the number of petitioners from 10% to 5% of the electors. There were concerns over the previous number being too cumbersome to obtain in the 30-day period. Another change added a provision, that upon the failure to obtain a sale, would prohibit the municipal authority from attempting a sale again for a period of 5 years. This was done to prevent the circumvention of an unfavorable result for the municipal authority by electing to sell again. The language also added a safeguard to prevent the municipal authority from finalizing any sale until the 30-day period is up for the petition. This was also as an added measure to prevent circumvention of the bill's intentions.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Kara Rochelle, Representative 104<sup>th</sup> District:**

Municipalities make consequential decisions about selling public assets without proper mechanism for citizen's input. The residents of Ansonia were concerned about the disbanding of the water Pollution Control authority and the sale. There was a public hearing with roughly 100 residents testifying against the sale, but the city chose to sell. The residents at the public hearing wanted a referendum. They ignored the request. There needs to be a mechanism for residents to petition for a referendum. We owe the residents of Connecticut a meaningful voice in decisions that effect the services and assets in their communities.

### **Shawn Dwyer, Recording Secretary, Teamsters, Local 443:**

This bill ensures that municipalities cannot unilaterally decide to sell off public assets or privatize services without consulting the community. Calling for a required ten percent of the electors to trigger a referendum empowers citizens. By making decisions on a vote, we safeguard the interests of our constituents and ensure that their concerns are prioritized. The bill enhances democratic participation and protects the interest of the citizens.

### **Lisa Glazer**

Municipalities should hold a referendum before selling publicly owned utilities. When municipalities sell public utilities, it often carries significant financial and economic consequences that can affect real estate values. Privatization can increase rates and reduce service quality because the private companies operate with a profit motive. Municipalities prioritize affordability and service reliability. Selling community assets off without direct input from the people they serve undermines local democratic principles.

### **Andrew Rhodes, President. AFSCME, Council 4 Local 1029:**

Privatization could negatively impact the quality of work and services to taxpayers. Profit motivations often take precedence over service excellence. The bill needs to ensure that public services are safeguarded from privatization that bypass community input. It is critical that constituents have a voice in decisions that affect the quality and delivery of services they receive.

### **Tara Kolakowski:**

As a resident of Ansonia this bill addresses the administration's sale of the Solid Water Pollution Treatment Plant against the wishes of the residents. Decisions of this magnitude should not be solely by the Board of Alderman, but also by the residents. This bill does just that.

### **Eileen Krugel:**

As a resident of Ansonia, I am concerned about the local government's ability to over-reach to sell off municipal properties. The mayor and governing board of alderman currently have the sole power to dispose or sell city properties, regardless of public sentiment during a public hearing. Our voices have not had any impact even though we called for referendums on these sales. I have included in my testimony some key points to consider on the sale of municipal properties.

The following also submitted testimony in support of the bill:

Amy Arutt  
Eric Guillet  
Millie Rios

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed.

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca**

**Date: March 20, 2025**