
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7221

AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL CAMPAIGN FINANCE FILINGS WITH THE STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION.

SUMMARY

This bill makes the following changes in the campaign finance laws:

1. requires various entities to file certain campaign financial disclosure statements related to municipal elections with the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC), rather than the town clerk;
2. requires that municipal campaign financial disclosure statements and all registration statements be filed with SEEC through a web-based program (i.e. eCRIS); and
3. modifies an existing exemption for refiling registration statements for certain political committees to conform to these changes and current practice.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2029

MUNICIPAL FILINGS

The bill requires the following entities to file financial disclosure statements or exemption certifications with SEEC rather than with the town clerk:

1. exploratory, candidate, and political state committees for municipal candidates;
2. political committees for referendum questions to be voted on by a single municipality; and

3. a slate of candidates in a primary election for justice of the peace.

If a slate of candidates for the office of justice of the peace unanimously agrees to be financed solely by a town committee, the bill requires the committee to file a consent statement with SEEC instead of the town clerk. By law, unchanged by the bill, if a consent statement is filed, the slate is exempt from political committee requirements (CGS § 9-605).

Existing law establishes deadlines for treasurers to file candidate committee statements or an exemption from them. Failing to do so subjects the treasurer or candidate to a late filing fee of \$100. The bill allows SEEC to waive these fees for any municipal candidate or treasurer who is participating in a primary or election for municipal office in 2029.

Additionally, since these statements will no longer be filed with the town clerks, the bill makes conforming changes and replaces related requirements that SEEC prepare, print, and provide campaign financial disclosure forms to the town clerks and that unsalaried town clerks receive 10 cents from the town for each filing. As under existing law, SEEC must still prepare, print, and distribute these forms to candidates and treasurers by request. SEEC must also print and distribute these forms to treasurers who have received a waiver to file electronically.

The bill also removes obsolete language referencing individual lobbyists filing with SEEC. In practice, lobbyists register with the Office of State Ethics (CGS § 1-94).

ELECTRONIC FILING

The bill also requires that the following statements be filed via a web-based program created by SEEC (i.e. eCRIS): (1) municipal campaign financial disclosure statements for candidate and exploratory committees, (2) all registration statements, and (3) amendments to electronically filed statements. The bill specifies that any amendment must be filed within (1) 10 days after the addition or change or (2) the period of time otherwise required by law.

Existing law already requires the use of eCRIS for certain entities: (1) treasurers for candidates and committees for certain state offices and (2) committees required to file with the commission. Additionally, under current law, registration statements must be filed electronically or manually with the proper authority (i.e. SEEC or the town clerk). The law also allows SEEC to waive the requirement to file electronically for good cause.

REGISTRATION EXEMPTION

The bill modifies an existing exemption to the requirement that certain political committees reregister with SEEC. Under current law, political committees required to file with SEEC must file a registration statement (1) within 10 days after organization and (2) by November 15 of each even-numbered year. The bill narrows the exemption to political committees established solely for (1) aiding or promoting candidates for municipal office or (2) the success or defeat of a referendum question. (These committees are generally not subject to the refiling requirement as they rarely last longer than one election.)

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

sSB 1409 (File 493), favorably reported by the Government Oversight Committee, contains identical provisions.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 17 Nay 2 (03/26/2025)