
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 1156

AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE RECOGNITION OF MINOR PARTIES FOR PURPOSES OF NOMINATING PETITIONS.

SUMMARY

This bill allows minor party candidates to qualify for ballot access in state, district, and municipal elections if a candidate under that party's designation for any state office received at least 1% of the votes cast for that office in the last election, rather than on a case-by-case basis as under current law. Under state law, "state office" includes the office of governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of the state, treasurer, comptroller, attorney general, and U.S. senator, but does not include presidential electors.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2026

MINOR PARTY BALLOT ACCESS

Under Connecticut's election system, candidates running for office can get their names on the ballot in one of three ways: (1) nomination by a major party, (2) nomination by a minor party, and (3) nomination by a nominating petition. The law differentiates how a candidate may gain ballot access depending on whether the party is major or minor.

Under current law, a "minor party" is one that is not a major party and whose candidate for the office in question received, under the same party designation, at least 1% of the votes cast for the same office at the last regular election. In other words, unlike major parties, minor parties qualify for ballot access on a case-by-case basis and cannot nominate candidates to offices for which they have not achieved minor party status.

By law, if the party does not have minor party status for a particular

office, a person may run under the party's designation only by submitting a signed petition to the secretary of the state. Under current law, it must be signed by (1) 1% of the qualified electors for the same office in the last-preceding election or (2) 7,500 qualified electors (1% is usually the lower threshold and therefore the one most petitioners must meet). For example, if a person is running for state senator, the petition must be signed by a total number of voters that equals 1% of all the voters that cast a ballot for that state senate race in the last election.

This bill instead allows petitioning minor party candidates to qualify for ballot access for state, district, or municipal offices if a candidate under that party's designation received 1% of the votes cast for a state office in the last election. Under existing law, unchanged by the bill, once a minor party has qualified to nominate a candidate for an office, the party does not have to submit a petition at the next election for that office. Failure to consecutively run candidates for that office results in losing minor party status for that office.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 13 Nay 6 (03/26/2025)