

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5533 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTION OF ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PROCESSES, ELECTIONS SITES, ELECTION WORKERS AND ELECTORS.

Vote Date: 3/23/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/13/2026

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would create prohibitions and penalties on and for the possession of a firearm or deadly weapon at or near certain elections-related locations. This legislation also enables the Attorney General to be involved in matters relating to election interference. The legislature hopes that by adopting these provisions, voters will feel safer when engaging in the democratic process through voting and encourage broader civic participation.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Consolidates prohibitions regarding checking voter's qualifications; adds transit exception to law enforcement prohibitions; and adds weather exception to mask prohibition.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State, Office of the Secretary of State](#)

Secretary Thomas, in support of HB 5533, states that with the increasing threat to election officials this bill will help to prevent similar problems in Connecticut. She believes this bill will establish clear boundaries around election sites, create penalties for the possession of weapons near election sites, expand existing protections for all election officials, reinforce the integrity of election administration processes by establishing penalties for tampering with voting equipment, absentee drop boxes, and having a clear mechanism to respond if interference occurs.

[William Tong, Attorney General, State of Connecticut](#)

Attorney General Tong supports this bill. He feels that it strengthens election security and gives the Attorney General's office greater authority to prevent interference with elections. It allows swift legal action against threats that could impact voting and requires election officials to report attempts to access sensitive election records or infrastructure.

Key provisions include restricting firearms within 250 feet of polling places to maintain safe, disruption-free voting environments, and establishing processes for required, timely notification by election officials and allows the Attorney General's office to assist in preventing the inappropriate seizure of election records or infrastructure. The bill also empowers the Attorney General to quickly seek court orders and bring civil actions against conduct or policies that could disrupt elections, enhancing the state's ability to protect voting rights in a rapidly evolving threat landscape.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Dean Delach](#) submitted testimony in support of this legislation noting that it is important to make it easier to vote, not harder. He stated that efforts to intimidate voters and election officials, as well as attempts to illegally seize voting equipment and ballots will continue to increase, as well as efforts to make it harder to vote. Dean emphasized that this legislation is important to protect the right to vote and have free and fair elections.

[Town of Greenwich, Rachel Khanna, Selectwoman](#) submitted testimony in support of this legislation noting that in 2024, Connecticut voters passed a referendum on Absentee Voting for all, to ensure voter access to the ballot in a secure and accessible way and protecting people's ability to exercise the right to vote in a way that is convenient to them. She expressed that for those opting to go to the polls on election day, we need to ensure they are not subject to intimidation or made to feel unsafe.

[Joseph Leib](#) submitted testimony in support of this legislation expressing that the second amendment is intended to protect the rights of citizens to own and carry firearms but even in its most extreme interpretation, the government should retain the right to regulate gun possession in sensitive areas. He stated that this bill is the type of common-sense legislation that even the most ardent supporter of the second amendment should find acceptable, as guns and voting are a volatile combination.

[Casey Neff](#) submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing that as a retired active-duty Army officer with deployments to three combat zones, a legal and responsible gun owner, and a poll worker, he believes that weapons of any sort must be banned from polling sites and adjacent grounds. He emphasized that political candidates and other citizens exercise their First Amendment rights to free speech outside many sites, and guns can inflame an already-charged political climate.

[Jeremy Pressman](#) submitted testimony in support of this legislation noting that we live in a time with too much political violence and the state desperately needs to do more to protect election workers. He expressed that previous gun reform efforts have worked to reduce gun violence and make us all safer. He added that this legislation has many other provisions that will help protect a key to maintaining a functioning democracy in the face of a federal

government bent on autocracy. He stated that the prospect of violent intimidation of poll workers is very real and with our democracy slipping away, passage of this bill is a step to protect what remains.

The following submitted general support for the bill:

[Make Voting Easy CT, Paula Bacolini, Founder](#)

[Sharon Baldwin](#)

[Felicia DeDominicis](#)

[Karen Edwards](#)

[Nancy Ellman](#)

[Diana Neff](#)

[Kathy Purtell](#)

[Dorothy Raviele](#)

[Marianne Schorer](#)

[Sally Turner](#)

[Faith Weidner, MD](#)

[Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, Carol J. Williams, PhD, Trustee](#)

[Anonymous 98](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Christopher Abbott](#) submitted testimony opposing this bill due to variety of second amendment reasons including punishing law-abiding citizens who are permitted and safe, creating gun free zones that are open to exploitation from criminals and armed agitators who do not follow the law, and permitted owners who must make the choice between voting and carrying their permitted guns and the cost of implementing these new laws in regards to training, public education of the new restrictions, increased resources required of the municipalities, and lack of a fiscal note outlining the costs associated with this bill, in time for the 2026 elections. Also cited is the duplication of current laws.

[Town of Woodbury, Lisa Amatruda, Registrar of Voters](#) submitted testimony noting that voter intimidation, coercion, and interference are already illegal under state and federal law. She noted that this legislation introduces broad and potentially confusing language into an area already governed by a detailed statutory framework regulating conduct at polling places and the authority of moderators. She voiced concerns about the intersection of two fundamental rights, voting and lawfully carrying a firearm. She implores the committee to reject Sections 1 and 2 of this legislation.

[Armond Cardillo](#) submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation sharing that he does not see how it makes anyone safer. He noted that this has the potential of making lawful gun owners who casually pass near polling locations a potential criminal. He noted with the changing nature of polling places, confusion may arise.

[Jeffrey Moores](#) submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation explaining that open carry, or even "openly displaying" a firearm is currently unlawful, and if there are concerns about intimidation or forced bias, then that behavior should be addressed. He pointed out that the mere possession of a weapon near an election site should not be against the law, but rather using that weapon to affect how people vote which should be unlawful. Jeffrey stated that he is also concerned about Line 53 in this legislation, as it appears to prohibit requiring

identification when voting, he posed why this legislation would prohibit requiring a voter from presenting their identification to ensure that voter is who they say they are.

[Central Connecticut Arms, LLC, Robert W. Pizzi, Jr., Owner](#) submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation noting that by banning carry at polling sites, the state is effectively mandating hundreds of thousands of permit holders to leave their firearms unattended in their vehicles while they vote. He said that is dangerous due to the potential of "smash-and-grab" thefts. Robert pointed out that criminals' intent on voter intimidation do not care about "Gun-Free Zone" signs and this legislation would only ensure that the most law-abiding demographic in the state is rendered defenseless in a crowded area. Robert shared that if a firearm is properly concealed, as the law currently requires, it is physically impossible for that firearm to "intimidate" anyone, because no one knows it is there. He stated that this legislation attempts to solve a problem that current law has already addressed and criminalizes a "hidden object" carried by a person whom the state has already deemed fit to carry it. He emphasized that this bill ignores reality and trades actual, physical security for a false sense of "comfort" and they do so at the expense of his customers' rights and the public's safety.

[William Quinn](#) submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation expressing that constitutional rights and self-protection should not be abridged. He pointed out that criminals choose the time, place, and their victim with no regard for gun laws. He noted that many towns have multiple elections during the year for budget referendums and other elections, he stated that it is far too burdensome to learn which of the 169 municipalities in the state are holding elections. He also stated that there is no way he can plan a route to safely travel throughout the state to ensure that he does not inadvertently travel into one of these areas. He shared that there is already a "Free Speech" buffer of 75 feet around polling places, and that should be a sufficient distance to ensure the safety of all involved with elections. He emphasized that elections must be secure, and we must ensure that people who are ineligible to vote are not allowed near a ballot or the ballot box. He raised that he believes the language in the bill as written conflicts with the Supremacy Clause of the United States Constitution.

[Richard Souza](#) submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation sharing that the establishment of "gun free zones" are ineffective as has been seen through numerous tragic school shootings. Richard stated that announcing that 250 feet around all polling stations in the state will now be "gun free" is the best way to ensure a mass shooting event at one of them. He added that it also ensures that uniformed police officers will be the first ones shot by a lunatic intent on inflicting mass casualties at a polling station. Richard stated that lunatics are crazy, but not stupid and seek out "gun free" zones because they know they will meet little resistance there. Richard expressed that the best way to protect the public is to allow law-abiding citizens their right to bear arms concealed, as that is the only thing lunatics and other criminals really fear. He shared that a firearm is only a weapon if the person bearing it chooses to use it that way. He emphasized that the state government should stop trying to misrepresent state permitted firearm owners as a danger to the public, as they have been vetted and determined to be law-abiding. He questions why the state would suddenly think the public would not be at risk if those same individuals carried concealed firearms anywhere near polling areas. He stated that this means the process for issuing state handgun permits was not effective at screening out threats to society, and if that is the case, should state handgun permits not be eliminated as a requisite for carrying handguns?

[CCDL, Roger Szendy](#) submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation expressing that to take his right of self-protection, at the very least, the government must supply that protection through metal detectors and armed security at polling places, but to say "dial 911" is insufficient, because when seconds count, the police are minutes away. Roger noted that the title of this legislation suggests that the state admits polling places are dangerous and that he thinks he should be encouraged to be responsible for his own self-defense. He pointed out that driving by town hall could result in a class D felony because there is a drop box on the sidewalk or the registrars working inside. He emphasized that his rights to self-defense and right to vote are not mutually exclusive.

[Kurt Weisheit](#) submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation noting that existing laws already criminalize voter intimidation and the brandishing of weapons. Kurt stated that this bill would also deprive election workers the right to have an effective means of self-defense if they felt threatened or intimidated in any way while carrying out their duties. He pointed out that "gun-free-zones" only protect bad actors since they would not obey such a law if their desire was to cause serious harm. He shared that this legislation also creates logistical burdens, as voters commuting with firearms would be forced to leave them unattended in vehicles, which would only increase theft risk and potential liability. Kurt also raised concerns over anyone lawfully carrying a firearm for self defense or other lawful purpose could unknowingly travel into or through one of these zones and become a felon even though they had no intent of harming or intimidating an election worker.

[Jared Wolff](#) submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation noting that the firearm provisions therein are vague and overbroad, as it prohibits firearms possession "at or near" elections-related locations, a standard that is undefined and potentially far-reaching. Jared stated that a permit holder who parks near a parking place, walks past a drop box, or is a neighbor of an election's facility could find themselves in violation of a criminal statute through no deliberate act. He expressed that Connecticut pistol permit holders are among the most thoroughly vetted individuals in the state, and there is no evidence that lawfully armed citizens near polling places represent a threat to election security. He posed that sweeping them into a criminal prohibition, based on proximity rather than conduct, is not a targeted or proportionate response to any identified problem. He also raised that this legislation could present serious legal challenges and constitutional concerns under [New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen \(2022\)](#). He expressed that protecting election workers from genuine threats and harassment is a legitimate and important goal, however the definitions of "harassing conduct" in this legislation should be scrutinized to ensure they do not inadvertently criminalize constitutionally protected speech, lawful observation of the electoral process, or the conduct of credentialed poll watchers. He emphasized that vague location-based firearms bans that expose law-abiding permit holders to criminal liability, and harassment provisions without precise definitions, will not make elections safer, but will rather create new traps for responsible citizens.

The following submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation stating that criminals ignore gun laws, and the only people who would follow this legislation are those who are not causing any problems in the first place. They shared that law-abiding firearms owners are not a threat to elections; they are citizens exercising a right that predates the state and this country. They expressed that this legislation sends a dangerous message in that constitutional rights can be limited whenever government officials decide they are convenient. They advise the

committee to not use election security as a justification to restrict the rights of citizens who have done nothing wrong:

[CCDL, Robert O'Connell](#)
[Charles Ostrout](#)

The following submitted testimony in opposition to this legislation sharing that it would force law-abiding citizens to choose between two foundational rights: the right to vote or the right to self-defense. They noted that "Gun Free" zones are a flawed concept, as criminals ignore these laws:

[Michael Barton](#)
[Christopher Baten](#)
[David Butler](#)
[David Cassidy](#)
[Howard Coling](#)
[Vincent Colombo](#)
[Erich Fiederlein](#)
[Richard Miller](#)
[Michael Nintean](#)
[CCDL, William Polowy](#)
[Patrick Smedick](#)
[David Talone](#)
[Carl Vassar](#)

The following individuals submitted testimony opposes HB 5533 for a variety of general reasons mostly a conflict of fundamental rights, flaws that "Gun Free Zones" present, redundancy of current law and permit holders being vetted and safe gun owners:

[Joseph Aresco](#)

[Robert Bazinet](#)

[Joshua Benoit](#)

[David Brill](#)

[Felicia Farnham](#)

[Edward Guerrere](#)

[Matthew Kieras](#)

[Paul Lozis](#)

[Robert Nyilas](#)

[CCDL, Shellene Olson](#)

[Joseph Papa](#)

[CCDL, James Parker](#)

[Mark Rossignol](#)

[Ladislaus Sacharko](#)

[Christopher Scarpa](#)

[CCDL, Brian Simpson, Member](#)

[CCDL, Carrie Simpson, Member](#)

[Ray Tao](#)

[Pavel Tolkachev](#)

[Thomas Turon](#)

[Jamie Ward](#)

[Terry Ward](#)

[Carl Weber](#)

Anonymous 103, 57, 61, 63, 71, 81, 83, 91, 94, 95, & 96

The following individuals submitted testimony opposes HB 5533 for a variety of second amendment and constitutional concerns including this legislation punishing law-abiding citizens who are permitted and safe firearm users:

[Robert Applegate](#)

[John J. Bear](#)

[Shirley Bloethe](#)

[Ann Bogucki](#)

[Robert Butler](#)

[Jim Casalone](#)

[Edward Colon](#)

[Jeff Cullins](#)

[Charles D. Rund](#)

[David Fama](#)

[Robert Furce](#)

[Charles Graffeo](#)

[Richard Harens](#)

[Suzanne Hodgdon](#)

[Justin Jiantonio](#)

[Robert Kalberer](#)

[Andrew Koehm](#)

[John Kornegay](#)

[Dr. Walt Kupson](#)

[William Lacey](#)

[Frank Lamarelli](#)

[Colby Lawson](#)

[Nabil Malouf](#)

[Matt Mazur](#)

[Scott McGregor](#)

[Anthony Mele](#)

[Patricia Moore](#)

[Brett Murphy](#)

[Dennis Pettway II](#)

[David Plank](#)

[Benjamin Purdy](#)

[Rebekah Senk](#)

[Timothy Shettleworth](#)

[Jennifer Suttle](#)

[Nate Ward](#)

[David Wilson](#)

Anonymous 102, 51, 59, 60, 64, 66, 67, 68, 72, 76, 78, 79, 47, 48, 49, 50, 65, 77, & 80

The following submitted general opposition to the bill:

[Anne Ahern](#)

[Neal Amato](#)

[Gwen Arment](#)

[Jon B](#)

[Daniel Battistoni](#)

[Charles Baugh](#)

[Stephen Belida](#)

[Stephen Bennett](#)

[William Blakley](#)

[Alan Blaschik](#)

[Karin Blaschik](#)

[Rev. Ron Boratko](#)

[Elizabeth Brooks](#)

[Michael Brooks](#)

[CCDL, Keith Cagle, Club Liaison](#)

[Thomas Chuckas](#)

[Richard Clavet](#)

[Ricky Daigle](#)

[Cynthia Dehner](#)

[Jared Dunn](#)

[Karie Fiorello](#)

[CCDL, Michael Franco](#)

[Ronald Goodmaster](#)

[Steven Izzo](#)

[Daniel Kean](#)

[Jacqueline Kenworthy](#)

[Douglas Kneissl](#)

[David Landau](#)

[Eastern CT Sportsmans Club-SAF, David LaPorte](#)

[Dominick Lettera](#)

[Jason Levy](#)

[Robert Lloyd](#)

[Ed Maccio](#)

[Tom Robinson](#)

[CCDL, Alex Romero](#)

[CCDL, George Romero](#)

[Carlos Sabathie](#)

[CCDL, Dayna Sabia](#)

[CCDL, Donna Sabia](#)

[CCDL, Edith Sabia](#)

[CCDL, Heather Sabia](#)

[CCDL, John Sabia](#)

[CCDL, Joseph Sabia](#)

[CCDL, Melanie Sabia](#)

[CCDL, Tony Sabia](#)

[David Slight](#)

[Seth Smith](#)

[Chris Vereneau](#)

[Diane Vyce](#)

GENERAL COMMENTS:

[Town of Rocky Hill, Thomas Pugliese, Registrar of](#) Voters submitted testimony advising the distance in this legislation be altered from 250 feet to 75 feet. He suggests removing Section 2 (c) and 2 (d).

Reported by: Tyler Fisher

Date: 04/07/2026