
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5344

AN ACT CONCERNING SUPERIOR COURT VENUE FOR ELECTION CASES.

SUMMARY

This bill requires certain election-related complaints, orders, and determinations to be brought in or made by the Superior Courts for the judicial districts of Hartford or Bridgeport, including actions under the state's voting rights act (VRA, see BACKGROUND). Current law allows any Superior Court with jurisdiction to hear these complaints or conduct these actions.

Under the bill, the following complaints, orders, and determinations are subject to this change in jurisdiction:

1. complaints about elections for statewide offices and probate judges (§§ 1 & 2);
2. complaints about elections for municipal offices or primaries for justices of the peace (§ 3);
3. complaints about the presidential preference primary; primaries for state, district, or municipal office; town committee primaries; or a primary pursuant to a special act (§ 4);
4. orders for removing a candidate's name that is improperly on a ballot in those primaries or any election (§ 5); and
5. actions brought under the state VRA, including complaints and determinations about voting discrimination (§§ 6-8 & 10); ordering remedies under the state VRA (§ 9); language assistance violations (§ 11); violations of preclearance requirements (§ 14; see below); and claims of intimidation, deception, or obstructing the right to vote (§ 15).

Current law also requires certain jurisdictions to get preclearance from the secretary of the state or the Superior Court where the municipality is located before enacting or implementing certain election policies or requirements. The bill instead requires these jurisdictions to receive preclearance from either the secretary or the Hartford or Bridgeport Superior Courts (§§ 12 & 13).

It also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, and applicable to complaints filed on or after this date.

BACKGROUND

State Voting Rights Act

In 2023, the state adopted legislation that generally codified several aspects of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 into state law. Broadly, the state’s law prohibits municipalities from (1) employing election methods in municipal elections that dilute the vote of protected class members or (2) imposing certain practices or policies in a way that impairs protected class members’ right to vote. It also authorizes the secretary of the state and certain aggrieved parties to file a civil action after following certain procedures.

Additionally, it generally prohibits engaging in intimidating, deceptive, or obstructive acts that affect the right to vote, requires certain municipalities to provide language-related assistance in voting and elections, and generally allows the secretary and certain aggrieved parties to file court actions alleging violations.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 13 Nay 6 (03/11/2026)