



2026 Acts Affecting Town Clerks and Elections

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Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts) significantly affecting town clerks and elections enacted during the 2026 regular legislative session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Municipalities, are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the [General Assembly's website](#) or the Connecticut State Library.

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Absentee Ballots

Assistance to Incarcerated Voters

The law outlines procedures for Department of Correction (DOC) employees to distribute, collect, and return absentee ballot applications for incarcerated voters who have retained their voting rights, including assisting incarcerated voters in filling out their applications. If DOC employees do so, a new act requires them to provide the address and telephone number of the facility where they are employed, instead of their residential address and personal telephone number as previously required ([PA 26-42](#), § 4, effective upon passage).

Automatic Absentee Ballot Application Status

Starting July 1, 2027, a new law allows voters to request to automatically receive absentee ballot applications for each election, primary, or referendum in which they are eligible to vote. The act requires town clerks and registrars to collaborate in verifying a voter's eligibility to automatically receive applications. It also establishes triggers for removing a voter's automatic absentee ballot application status (such as being placed on the inactive registry list) ([PA 26-76](#), § 37, effective July 1, 2027).

Ballots and Related Materials

A new act makes various changes to absentee balloting sets and related materials including (1) consolidating the inner and outer envelopes into one "return envelope," (2) expanding the information included on the envelope, (3) requiring a privacy sleeve, and (4) switching from serial numbers to unique ballot ID numbers.

The act also modifies requirements for unsolicited absentee ballot applications mailed by certain entities and their agents. Lastly, it eliminates the prohibition on distributing absentee ballot applications without the applicable year noted on them (but still prohibits clerks from accepting, and people from using, ballot applications without the correct year noted) ([PA 26-42](#), various sections, generally effective upon passage).

Eligibility

This year, the legislature expanded absentee voting to all eligible voters by eliminating the statutory reasons required to vote absentee. Correspondingly, it modified various absentee balloting provisions in state law, including (1) specifying that town clerks, when required by federal law, must send absentee ballots electronically or by mail as requested by a voter, including for presidential ballots, and (2) allowing voters with permanent absentee ballot status to receive absentee ballots electronically ([PA 26-42](#), §§ 1, 4 & 14-17, effective upon passage).

Rejected Absentee Ballot Log

This year, the legislature passed a law requiring moderators to keep and transmit to the secretary of the state (SOTS) a log of absentee ballots that are rejected due to the voter failing to (1) sign the return envelope or (2) provide sufficient identification required by federal law if voting absentee for the first time after registering by mail and not providing identification at that time ([PA 26-1](#), § 90, as amended by [PA 26-42](#), § 10, effective upon passage).

Submission and Processing

A new law makes various changes to the submission and processing of absentee ballots, including (1) deeming an absentee ballot as cast when properly signed by the voter and accepted by the town clerk; (2) requiring town clerks to retrieve ballots from absentee ballot drop boxes on each business day instead of each weekday; (3) establishing procedures for voters to cure their absentee ballots if they failed to sign the return envelope; (4) modifying the deadlines for sorting and processing absentee ballots; and (5) requiring SOTS to develop and install absentee ballot tracking software ([PA 26-42](#), §§ 6-8, 10 & 73, effective upon passage).

Task Force on Absentee Ballots in Unconsolidated Cities and Boroughs

A newly created nine-person task force will study absentee ballot access in certain cities and boroughs in the state that are unconsolidated with the towns where they are located. For elections, primaries, and referenda in these cities and boroughs, the task force must examine possible absentee ballot application procedures and delivery methods. It must report its findings and recommendations to the Government Administration and Elections Committee by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-42](#), § 70, effective upon passage).

Election Actions, Complaints, and Penalties

Absentee Ballot Drop Box Tampering

State law authorizes voters to cast their absentee ballots by depositing them in designated drop boxes during the absentee voting period. This year, legislators established new criminal penalties for certain acts related to these drop boxes such as (1) tampering with or destroying them; (2) changing or destroying ballots inside; or (3) fraudulently adding ballots to those taken from a drop box ([PA 26-42](#), § 60, effective July 1, 2026).

Civil Rights Actions

State law authorizes the attorney general (AG) to investigate, intervene in, and bring civil or administrative actions on behalf of the state to seek relief for civil rights violations (generally depriving a person of constitutional or legal rights). A new law expands the attorney general's authority to take these actions by allowing him to do so when anyone (1) has established a policy that deprives or interferes with another person's civil rights or (2) interferes, or attempts to interfere, with a person's civil rights through physical obstruction ([PA 26-42](#), § 61, effective July 1, 2026).

Declaratory Judgments for Aggrieved Voters

A new law allows SOTS to start a declaratory judgment action in court if a voter alleges they have been harmed under the state's election laws at least 90 days before an election or primary. The action must seek an order to ensure election administration procedures are properly executed, and voters' rights are adequately protected under the state's election laws ([PA 26-1](#), § 89, effective upon passage).

Election Interference Actions

A new law authorizes the AG to seek preliminary or permanent injunctive, declaratory, or other appropriate equitable relief to prevent or resolve interference in elections for presidential electors and congressional offices. The law also sets hearing procedures for resolving these actions and allows the court to make emergency orders under exigent circumstances ([PA 26-42](#), § 34, effective July 1, 2026).

Election-Related Court Case Notifications

A new act requires a party that files certain election-related court actions to notify SOTS if it alleges a violation of the right to vote or a pattern, practice, or policy of discrimination against any protected class under various election laws, including the U.S. and state constitutions. Similarly, it requires a municipality's corporation counsel to timely notify the secretary if the municipality has been the subject of any court order or government enforcement action connected to these laws ([PA 26-1](#), § 78, effective upon passage).

Election Worker Harassment

It is illegal to publicly disclose an election worker's personal identifying information with the intent to harass, terrorize, or alarm the worker or improperly influence them in performing their election administration duties. This year, the legislature increased the penalty for subsequent offenses of this law from a class A misdemeanor to a class C felony. Relatedly, the legislature expanded the

existing provisions regarding election worker harassment to protect assistant municipal clerks. In doing so, the new law (1) penalizes harassment of assistant clerks and (2) gives them a civil cause of action against violators ([PA 26-42](#), § 58, effective July 1, 2026).

Investigations Into Complaints Regarding Town Clerks

This year, the General Assembly narrowed the law regarding AG investigations into complaints about town clerks. Under a new act, the AG may investigate a town clerk if the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) consults with him about alleged violations by a town clerk stemming from a SEEC investigation into election law violations. Prior law generally allowed the AG to investigate any written complaints about a town clerk's alleged misconduct, willful and material neglect of duty, or incompetence in conducting any of their duties. The act generally maintains the existing resolution process for these complaints, including the AG's authority in these matters, the hearing procedures, and the possible remedy of removing the town clerk ([PA 26-42](#), § 43, effective July 1, 2026).

Notification of Election-Related Subpoenas, Warrants, or Requests

This year, the legislature adopted a law requiring all municipal officials, including election workers, to provide a copy of any subpoena, warrant, or other request to inspect or take elections records to the attorney general and SOTS within 36 hours of receiving it. Both officers must post procedures for submitting these copies to them on their websites ([PA 26-42](#), § 33, effective July 1, 2026).

Prohibited Acts Near Election Sites

A new law generally prohibits law enforcement officers and those that have control over them from knowingly being within 250 feet of an elections site, with certain exceptions, or being within this perimeter to check voter qualifications. It also specifies limitations for conducting law enforcement activities within this perimeter, such as having a judicial warrant or order specifically authorizing the activity within the restricted perimeter. The new law also prohibits anyone from wearing a mask or other covering within 250 feet of an election site, with certain exceptions. Accordingly, it establishes criminal penalties for violations of these provisions and disenfranchises individuals for certain violations ([PA 26-42](#), § 57, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 36, effective July 1, 2026).

SEEC Complaints and Investigations

Existing law generally requires SEEC to dismiss a complaint if it does not issue a final decision within one year of receiving it (which may be extended for certain delays). Starting October 1, 2026, a new act exempts complaints concerning violations of prohibited acts under state election law from this deadline ([PA 26-133](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Relatedly, another new act authorizes SEEC to investigate and resolve alleged violations of election regulations, as they are currently authorized to do so for election statutes ([PA 26-42](#), § 22, effective upon passage).

Unauthorized Sharing of Tabulators or Tabulator Parts

Under existing law, it is generally a class D felony for an election official to tamper with voting tabulators or alter ballots read by the tabulators. A new law additionally makes it a class D felony for an election official to give a third party any tabulator or tabulator part or appliance, unless authorized by SOTS ([PA 26-42](#), § 59, effective July 1, 2026).

Election Administration

17-Year-Old Access to Absentee Ballots and Early Voting

The state constitution allows citizens who are 17 years old and will be 18 years old before election day to register to vote (and vote in a related primary). This year, the General Assembly specified that these voters, if registered and otherwise qualified as an elector, may vote by absentee ballot or use early voting at the upcoming election ([PA 26-42](#), § 40, effective July 1, 2026).

Amending and Reporting Election Returns

A new law requires election officials in all municipalities, instead of only those in municipalities with multiple voting districts, to meet to correct errors in election night returns and submit amended returns if necessary ([PA 26-1](#), § 77, effective upon passage).

Ballot Filing With SOTS

Prior law required registrars to file with SOTS a sample election ballot 10 days before an election's early voting period. A new law instead requires town clerks to file all official election and primary ballots with SOTS for her approval at least 10 days before the early voting period begins. It also prohibits using any of these ballots unless they have been approved. Similarly, it requires town clerks to file absentee ballots for elections and primaries with the secretary before they are printed and prohibits them from being used until they are approved ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 83-87, effective upon passage).

Early Voting

This year, the General Assembly made several changes to the state's early voting procedures. Primarily, the new legislation requires early voting ballots to be inserted and counted by a voting tabulator instead of being sealed in a ballot envelope, stored by town clerks, and transported to the

registrars on election day for counting. The legislation also (1) changes the requirements for certifying early voting and same-day election registration (SDR) locations; (2) requires the town's legislative body, instead of its registrars, to select the place of any additional early voting location; and (3) prohibits certain political activities of election and primary officials when carrying out their duties at early voting or SDR locations ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 69-73, effective upon passage).

Electronic Poll Book Notifications

By law, registrars must use a paper-based list for checking in voters on election day or for early voting and may only use electronic lists (electronic poll books) as authorized by SOTS. A new law codifies current practice by specifying that electronic lists may only be used in conjunction with the official paper-based list.

Additionally, if the registrars plan to use an electronic list, they must post conspicuous written notice on the municipality's website and at a readily accessible place at town hall or the town's municipal building at least 14 days before any election's or primary's early voting period or a referendum ([PA 26-42](#), § 69, effective January 1, 2027).

Endorsement and Nomination Petition Correction Process

A new law creates a process for candidates to correct endorsement certificates and certificates of candidacies for nomination. The law also (1) allows SOTS to amend certificates to correct errors or omissions; (2) requires her to maintain a record of any amendment she makes; and (3) requires that if she does identify an error, she must make best efforts to notify the affected candidate so an authorized individual can correct it ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 79-82, as amended by [PA 26-42](#), §§ 65-68, effective upon passage).

Faithless Electors

This year, the legislature adopted a law requiring presidential electors to sign a pledge that they will vote for the candidate they are pledged to support. The law also establishes procedures for removing and replacing electors who do not support their pledged candidate at the meeting of presidential electors ([PA 26-76](#), §§ 73-75, effective October 1, 2026).

Mail Voter Registration Applications

Prior law required SOTS to provide the Federal Election Commission's mail voter registration application form and registrars to accept applications that use it. A new act instead requires that SOTS provide and accept applications that use the Election Assistance Commission's form ([PA 26-42](#), §§ 38 & 39, effective upon passage).

Municipal Candidate Nomination Forms

Prior law required registrars to make petition forms for municipal candidates or town committee members available beginning on the day following the (1) party's endorsement of candidates for that position or (2) final day for endorsements under state law, whichever comes first. A new act eliminates the first deadline and just maintains the second ([PA 26-42](#), § 42, effective October 1, 2026).

Party Enrollment Privileges for Unaffiliated Voters

By law, unaffiliated voters who are eligible to vote, in most cases, are immediately entitled to the privileges of party enrollment (such as voting in a party's primary) if they apply in person with the registrars by noon on the business day before a primary. But those applying by other means (such as by mail) must apply further in advance to be entitled to these privileges before a primary. A new act extends this application timeframe to at least 18 days before the primary, rather than at least five days before as prior law required. As under existing law, those applying within the specified timeframe are entitled to the privileges after the primary, with certain exceptions ([PA 26-1](#), § 74, effective upon passage).

Political Party Rules

This year, the legislature made various changes regarding political party rules. The changes include (1) requiring these rules, and any amendments to them, to comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act; (2) requiring any disputes arising under a party's rules be referred to the party's state central committee; and (3) deeming that a minor party's state party rules apply to the minor party's enrolled members and candidates in municipalities without a local minor party ([PA 26-42](#), § 41, effective October 1, 2026).

Recanvass Procedures

A new law requires recanvassing all voting districts when a discrepancy occurs, not just the district with the discrepancy. Additionally, the new law expands the reasons for which a moderator may order someone to be removed during a recanvass to include causing a disorder that interferes with the recanvass by attempting to communicate with him or her. It allows each political party, or each candidate (in the case of a recanvass where there are multiple candidates from a political party) to select a party representative who may communicate directly with the moderator during the recanvass ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 91-93, effective upon passage).

Additionally, another new law allows a recanvass to use different voting tabulators than those used during the election contest or use high-speed voting tabulators, if the recanvass is conducted (1) at

SOTS' office or (2) within the municipality if the secretary agrees to the moderator's requests to borrow these tabulators. The law also explicitly specifies that recanvasses due to a tie vote must be held in the same manner as voting discrepancy recanvasses ([PA 26-42](#), §§ 35-37, effective July 1, 2026).

Risk-Limiting Audits

In 2026, the legislature implemented risk-limiting audits (RLAs) for state elections, but generally maintained the existing post-election audit process for federal and state primaries and municipal elections. RLAs are publicly verifiable auditing procedures that manually examine a statistical sample of paper ballots and guarantee a specified risk limit. To accomplish this, the act establishes the general scope and procedures for RLAs and requires the secretary to set instructions and procedures for the audits and adopt related regulations. Relatedly, it also establishes an RLA pilot program in three random municipalities of certain populations ([PA 26-42](#), §§ 44-56, generally effective January 1, 2027).

Special Election Writ Delays for Vacancies Due to Death

A new law delays when the governor may issue a writ calling for a special election to fill vacancies in certain offices due to the death of the elected official or member elect. Specifically, the governor must generally wait 7 to 17 days before issuing the writ for most vacancies (subject to existing exceptions and alternative timelines for probate judges). The new law otherwise maintains the existing timeline for vacancies created for other reasons, such as resignations ([PA 26-86](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Voter Qualification Examinations

State law outlines when voters may register to vote in person and have their voter qualifications examined, including submitting applications to the registrars, or their assistants or deputies, at any time at a non-public place in town. New legislation specifies that the non-public place must be mutually agreed upon between the applicant and the registrar ([PA 26-42](#), § 30, effective upon passage).

Municipal Government

Election Frequency

Starting in 2027, municipalities may hold municipal elections every four years if their charter allows it, regardless of any other law ([PA 26-42](#), § 29, effective October 1, 2026).

Initiating Local Legislation in the General Assembly

This year, the legislature eliminated the requirement that a local government (such as a town or taxing district) seeking a change to its special act powers (generally its charter) file a certified copy of the local resolution or petition requesting the change with the state. Prior law required that this copy be filed with SOTS at least 10 days before the start of the legislative session where it would be considered. As under existing law, the legislature may opt to enact the requested legislation, but the statutory process does not automatically create a bill on which legislators can or must vote ([PA 26-132](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Justices of the Peace

Justices are normally appointed according to a four-year schedule. A new law, among other things, establishes processes for appointing them when (1) a municipality creates new justice positions at least 91 days ahead of the next scheduled appointment period or (2) the town clerk must fill vacancies but did not get enough applications during the quadrennial application filing period ([PA 26-141](#), §§ 4 & 5, effective October 1, 2026).

Limited Exception Allowing Municipal Employees to Serve on Board of Finance

This year, the legislature created an additional exception to a statutory prohibition on municipal employees serving on the board of finance in the municipality in which they work and live. The exception allows these employees, if they receive a stipend for their work, to serve on the board as long as the stipend is less than \$10,000 in any rolling 12-month period ([PA 26-136](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Proof of Eligibility for Veterans' Property Tax Exemptions

By law, veterans and their families claiming a property tax exemption based on military service must generally show the town clerk proof of the qualifying service. Under prior law, this proof had to show the veteran had an honorable discharge from military service, despite other discharge characterizations qualifying a veteran (or his or her family) for an exemption. A new law expands what proof they may show, aligning the requirements with eligibility criteria in existing law ([PA 26-114](#), § 21, effective October 1, 2026).

School Budget Referenda Notifications

State law generally prohibits spending government funds to send unsolicited electronic or automated communications about school budget referenda or to advocate for or against a referendum, except for certain notices. A new law explicitly allows a school superintendent to give

written notice through the schools within the district to inform parents or legal guardians that a referendum about the school district is coming up.

This notice may only include (1) the referendum's time and location; (2) a statement of the question as it will appear on the ballot; and (3) if applicable, the explanatory text or other material prepared and approved under state law. It may not advocate for or against the question or try to influence its success or defeat ([PA 26-68](#), § 252, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 107, effective upon passage).

Voter Participation

A new law allows municipalities, within existing resources, to establish pilot programs to promote the goal of achieving 100% voter participation, subject to the state's election laws and municipal restrictions on diverging from certain state election policies. The law also establishes a task force to study achieving this, along with other ways to increase civic engagement ([PA 26-42](#), §§ 71 & 72, effective July 1, 2026).

Records and Filings

Disclosure of Voter Registration Information

This year, the legislature limited the disclosure and use of voter registration information by restricting its use to election-related, scholarly, journalistic, political, or governmental purposes and specifically prohibiting its use for personal, private, or commercial purposes. The new law authorizes SEEC to impose a civil penalty of up to \$2,000 per offense for violating these provisions.

Relatedly, under prior law, a person's birth month and year could be disclosed if requested, with the full birthdate available for any governmental purpose. Under a new law, (1) only a voter's birth year may generally be disclosed and (2) disclosure of a voter's full birthdate is limited to state governmental purposes ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 96 & 97, effective upon passage).

Electronic Death Records

A new law specifically requires the Department of Public Health to issue death records or information electronically upon request (previously, the department did so only for deaths since July 1, 1997) ([PA 26-68](#), § 187, effective upon passage).

FOIA Exemption for Ballots

New legislation prohibits ballots cast at an election, primary, or referendum from being disclosed under the state's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) ([PA 26-1](#), § 94, effective upon passage).

Marriage License Waiting Period

A new law requires vital statistics registrars (often town clerks) to wait at least 48 hours after receiving an application for a marriage license before issuing it. It correspondingly delays the period during which the wedding can be held (no sooner than 48 hours after applying for the license and no later than 65 days after the license's issuing date, rather than the application date) ([PA 26-141](#), §§ 6 & 7, effective October 1, 2026).

Referendum Questions Under Home Rule Ordinances

This session, the legislation passed a law clarifying that a referendum includes a question submitted to municipal voters under a home rule ordinance. It further specifies that election laws apply to these questions in the same way that they already apply to questions submitted to municipal voters under charters and special acts ([PA 26-1](#), § 95, effective upon passage).

Trade Names

A new law makes various changes in the state's trade name laws, including:

1. requiring town clerks to record trade names and have trade name certificates issued from the Connecticut Trade Name Registry;
2. prohibiting the use of specific words in trade names and makes any trade name accepted by a town clerk and entered on the Connecticut Trade Name Registry void by operation of law if it contains a prohibited word (for example, corporation, limited liability company or partnership, statutory trust, or certain related abbreviations);
3. modifying trade name renewal, amendment, and cancellation procedures;
4. requiring town clerks to retain all trade name records received and created, regardless of the date, in compliance with the record retention periods set by the state's public records administrator; and
5. specifying that after January 1, 2025, a copy of the record, as reflected on the Connecticut Trade Name Registry and bearing a copy of the secretary's signature, is presumptive evidence in all courts in Connecticut of the facts in the trade name record ([PA 26-81](#), §§ 1-5, generally effective October 1, 2026).

Registrars and Election Officials

Assistant Town Clerks on Election Day

State law generally prohibits candidates from serving as election officials or at the polls on election day. A new law allows assistant town clerks running for town clerk to still perform their official

duties on election day (just as existing law allows for deputy registrars of voters running to be a registrar of voters) ([PA 26-42](#), § 31, effective upon passage).

Moderators

A new law makes several changes regarding election moderators including (1) modifying registrar reporting requirements concerning moderators; (2) implementing moderator requirements for SDR locations like those for early voting locations; and (3) expanding the prohibition for individuals convicted or who have pled to certain crimes from being a moderator ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 69, 71, 72, 75 & 76, effective upon passage).

Registrar Training Requirements

A new act requires deputy registrars of voters to complete a registrar training program and become certified by SOTS, as already required for registrars. Further, the act expands existing provisions about registrar training to deputy registrars including, among others, requiring (1) towns to pay the costs of completing the program and obtaining this certification, (2) deputy registrars to annually complete eight hours of continuing education to retain their certification, and (3) SOTS to direct deputy registrars to take remedial measures she requires if they fail to meet the annual training requirement. Correspondingly, the act repeals a duplicative requirement that each registrar annually designate themselves or one of their deputies or assistants to receive additional registrar training ([PA 26-42](#), §§ 63, 64 & 73, effective upon passage).

Relieving Deputy Registrars of Voters From Duty

Existing law allows SOTS to temporarily relieve a registrar of voters from duty, following certain procedures, if the registrar (1) failed to obtain or maintain their certification or (2) is subject to a SEEC investigation stemming from a statement SOTS filed with SEEC. A new law expands these provisions to also cover deputy registrars ([PA 26-42](#), § 32, effective January 1, 2027).

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