



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SENATE
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591
SENATE REPUBLICAN OFFICES

November 2, 2015

The Honorable Denise Merrill
Secretary of the State
State of Connecticut
30 Trinity Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Secretary Merrill:

As state legislators, including the Ranking Member of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, it is our responsibility to make sure that our democratic elections process operates without bias or error and in accordance with state statutes and regulations. Elections are a fundamental part of the democratic process we must strive to protect. Therefore, a request by any candidate, no matter their party affiliation, should always be taken seriously when they are seeking help to ensure the integrity of the election system. In light of this, we echo the requests made of your office to send observers to the polls in Bridgeport during Tuesday's election.

If there is any concern that the sanctity of the election process could be tainted, your office needs to take affirmative steps to ensure that process is protected. While you have stated in the press that you cannot take any action unless there is evidence of inappropriate activity, we believe failures of the system in recent years raise more than enough concerns for you to take action now.

As you are well aware, these failures include the following:

- During the 2010 election, Bridgeport experienced a serious ballot shortage, with only 21,000 ballots prepared for 69,000 registered voters. The situation resulted in chaos and confusion that jeopardized the democratic process. In addition to confusion over poll hours, there was confusion over where people could vote and some voters were turned away from polls multiple times.
- According to reports by Hearst Media, between 1988 and 2011, the State Elections Enforcement Commission has investigated at least 17 complaints involving Bridgeport absentee ballots. This year, during the Bridgeport Democrat mayoral primary multiple candidates also filed complaints with state and federal elections and law enforcement agencies over city and state officials' mishandling of absentee ballots to allegedly influence the election.

In addition to these deep rooted issues, we cannot ignore the fact that one of the candidates in the Bridgeport mayoral race has a criminal record stemming from his actions while in public office. We believe any candidate, from any party, should have support available to them to help ensure honesty is upheld, especially when there is a history of past deception.

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Given all of these factors, your office should be proactively asking itself what could go wrong in this heated municipal election.

To deny a request for an observer with the explanation that “we need evidence something has happened to do anything,” is fundamentally shortsighted and not in keeping with the principals of your obligations as Secretary of the State.

We all know that if something goes wrong the courts will never reverse an election. A wait and see approach to monitoring elections is ineffective in that it does not allow you to act when the problem is before us. Such an approach could therefore invite dishonest activities knowing a future investigation would never change the end result.

On the other hand, if you do choose to use your power to send an observer, who would object? How would they object? What court would ever prohibit you from sending observers to a city that has had a consistent history of election issues? Your decision not to send an observer certainly could result in far more consequences if something inappropriate happens than the consequences of sending an observer and nothing happening.

The ultimate safeguarding of the election process is your responsibility and your decision. The bottom line is clear; you have the power to take proactive measures to ensure the system is protected. The question is: are you going to exert that power? We hope you do.

Sincerely,



Len Fasano
Senate Minority Leader
34th District



Michael McLachlan
Deputy Minority Leader
24th District