

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION LAWS

2025-2026 (194th) BILL SUMMARY

Bill Number: H.4224

Title: An Act validating the New Salem annual town election

Sponsor(s): Rep. Aaron L. Saunders, Sen. Joanne M. Comerford

Hearing Date: July 8, 2025

Reporting Deadline: September 6, 2025

Prior History: N/A

Similar Matters: N/A

CURRENT LAW: Section 10. Every town meeting or town election, except as hereinafter provided, shall be called in pursuance of a warrant, under the hands of the selectmen, notice of which shall be given at least seven days before the annual meeting or an annual or special election and at least fourteen days before any special town meeting. The warrant shall be directed to the constables or to some other persons, who shall forthwith give notice of such meeting in the manner prescribed by the by-laws, or, if there are no by-laws, by a vote of the town, or in a manner approved by the attorney general. The warrant for all town meetings shall state the time and place of holding the meeting and the subjects to be acted upon thereat. The town meeting may be held in one or more places; provided, that if it is held in more than one place, the places are connected by means of a public address system and loud speakers so that the proceedings in all such places may be heard and participated in by all the voters present therein. Whenever the moderator determines that voters are being excluded from the town meeting because there is no room for them in the places provided or that voters in attendance are being deprived of the opportunity to participate therein for any reason whatsoever, he shall either, on his own motion recess the meeting for any period during the day of the meeting or, after consultation with the members of the board of selectmen then present, adjourn the same to another date, not later than fourteen days following the date of said meeting, when places and facilities sufficient to accommodate all voters attending and to enable them to participate therein shall be available. The selectmen shall insert in the warrant for the annual meeting all subjects the insertion of which shall be requested of them in writing by ten or more registered voters of the town and in the warrant for every special town meeting all subjects the insertion of which shall be requested of them in writing by one hundred registered voters or by ten per cent of the total number of registered voters of the town whichever number is the lesser. The selectmen shall call a special town meeting upon request in writing, of two hundred registered voters or of twenty per cent of the total number of registered voters of the town, whichever number is the lesser; such meeting to be held not later than forty-five days after the receipt of such request, and shall insert in the warrant therefor all subjects the insertion of which shall be requested by said petition. No action shall be valid unless the subject matter thereof is contained in the warrant. Two or more distinct town meetings for distinct purposes may be called by the same warrant.

The written requests of registered voters for the insertion of subjects in town meeting warrants shall not be valid unless the required number of registered voters not only sign their names but also state their residence, with street and number, if any. The selectmen shall submit such written requests to the board of registrars of voters or the board of election commissioners who shall check and forthwith certify the number of signatures so checked which are names of voters in the town, and only names so checked and certified shall be counted. A greater number of names than are required in each case need not be certified.

SUMMARY: This legislation ratifies, validates, and confirms all votes cast by voters of the Town of New Salem at the annual town election held on May 5, 2025, despite any defects or omissions in how the election was called. The act takes effect upon its passage