

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1187-FN, relative to the time in which candidates for state representative may file their candidacy for a special election.

Hearing Date: March 31, 2026

Time Opened: 1:53 p.m.

Time Closed: 1:59 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Lang, Perkins Kwoka and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: Senator Rochefort

Bill Analysis: This bill allows candidates for state representative in a special election to file for 3 days with their town or city clerk.

Sponsors:

Rep. Berry

Rep. Qualey

Who supports the bill: Rep. Ross Berry, Rep. Robert Wherry, Eric Pauer

Who opposes the bill: Tina Guilford, Sarah Burke Cohen, Cory Stone, Katherine Phelps

Who is neutral on the bill: None

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Ross Berry, Prime Sponsor

- This is a simple change that allows candidates for state representative 3 days to file with their city or town clerk to run in a special election.
- Often, with short notice, candidates need to drive to Concord and submit their filings with the Secretary of State to qualify for a special election.

Senator Perkins Kwoka stated that she has heard that often, there isn't even enough time for these vacancies to be posted in order to be filled.

Rep. Berry said yes, sometimes there can be less than 48 hours notice.

Tina Guilford, Derry Town Clerk

- Opposes this bill.
- The requirement that they must be open for 3 days is a problem because some town offices are only open 1 day a week.
- Previously, the law stated that they could file on Mondays or Tuesdays if their clerk was open, otherwise, they had to go to the SOS office to file.
- Maybe a solution would be to allow them to file with their local clerk when their clerk is open.

Senator Long asked about the 2 hours.

Ms. Guilford explained that the two hours are a minimum per day, so for example, if a town is only open one day per week, they would now be required to be open an additional two days. This would be a burden.

Senator Perkins Kwoka said that this only arises in special elections, and this would be rare.

Ms. Guilford said it would be rare, but it does happen.