

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1600-FN, relative to access to the centralized voter registration database on election days.

Hearing Date: April 14, 2026

Time Opened: 9:30 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:44 a.m.

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

Members of the Committee Absent: Senator Perkins Kwoka

Bill Analysis: This bill requires the secretary of state, town, and city clerks to ensure that each polling place in the state has access to the statewide centralized voter registration database on each state, local, and federal election day during the operating hours of that polling place.

Sponsors:

Rep. Wilhelm

Rep. Berry

Who supports the bill: 189 people signed in to support the bill. For a full list of names, please contact committee aide, Jessica Bourque, at jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov

Who opposes the bill: 1 person signed in opposed to the bill. For a full list of names, please contact committee aide, Jessica Bourque, at jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov

Who is neutral on the bill: 2 people signed in neutral on the bill. For a full list of names, please contact committee aide, Jessica Bourque, at jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Matt Wilhelm, Prime Sponsor, Hillsborough-District 21

- This bill ensures that every polling location has access to the statewide centralized voter registration database for the full election day.
- On election day, workers are under a lot of pressure and handling many tasks. This bill gives them a critical tool to do that work with greater confidence and more efficiently.
- This bill is grounded on two principles:
 - Every voter should be able to cast a ballot if they are eligible.
 - Election workers should have access to as much data as possible to verify voter information, ensuring no eligible voter is turned away.

- Absence of data alone should not disqualify a voter.
- The MOU between the Secretary of State (SOS) and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) works, and he believes it should be codified into law.

Senator Gray said he believes the law already passed says DMV records and vital statistics will be available at the polls. What is happening that needs to change, and why is this bill necessary if those things are available already?

Rep. Wilhelm said SB 438, which is a similar bill to this, and there is an MOU in place between the two agencies. This would codify that into law.

Senator Lang expressed concern about the last page. The bill covers access and training for individuals so there isn't abuse of the system, but the last page states that DMV records "shall" be given to the SOS and questions whether DMV has been part of these discussions.

Rep. Wilhelm said he was not at the work session for this bill, but he knows the DMV was engaged and would be happy to answer any questions about it.

Sara Ortiz, Open Democracy

- Supports this bill.
- This bill is largely an administrative bill.
- In the 2025 town elections, nonpartisan poll observers documented unusually long wait times for voters attempting to register at the polls. Many of these delays stemmed from uncertainty about recently enacted laws. Real-time database access addresses this problem.
- This brings consistency to election administration statewide.
- There is no fiscal impact to the state, county, or local budgets.
- Reasonable operational standards that make elections more secure and accessible.

Dan Healey, Nashua City Clerk

- Neutral on this bill.
- Likes the bill but has concerns about it.
- His concern is that bigger municipalities will require extra staff trained to access this information for staffing their locations.
- Logistical issues are his concern.
- During the November city elections, calls to the city clerk's office were manageable because voter turnout was relatively low. However, in 2024, 7000 people registered to vote; call volume in Nashua would likely be much higher during a major election.

Lisa Kovak, NH Campaign for Voting Rights

- Supports this bill.
- This is already happening between the SOS and DMV, and it is important that this gets codified.

Brendan O'Donnell, Deputy Secretary of State

- Neutral on this bill.
- The SOS is already doing this.
- Other than keeping the MOU in place, the added language states that data transmission be through secure means, which is already happening.
- Lines 6-9 provide clarification of access to the database and define “direct access” and “indirect access”.
- The section of the statute addressing the SOS’s discretion to consult with the Department of Safety (DOS) and the Department of Information Technology (DOIT) to ensure data protection would be revised. It now states that the SOS “may” consult with these departments, but the bill updates this to "shall," making it mandatory.
- The bill also specifies that if the SOS enters into an agreement, any resulting report will be sent not only to the Senate President and the Speaker of the House but also to the Majority and Minority leaders of both chambers.