

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Tricia Melillo 271-3077

HB 1345, relative to the length of terms for Coos county officers.

Hearing Date: April 30, 2024

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

Members of the Committee Absent : Senators Abbas and Soucy

Bill Analysis: This bill provides that at the 2024 state general election, and following elections, the county attorney, treasurer, register of deeds, register of probate, and sheriff for Coos county shall serve 4-year terms.

Sponsors:

Rep. A. Davis

Rep. Ouellet

Rep. Tierney

Who supports the bill: Representative Arnold Davis, Representative Jim Tierney, Representative Mike Ouellet, Representative Leon Rideout, Kate Horgan (NH Association of Counties), Eric Pauer, Simon Berrio

Who opposes the bill: None

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Arnold Davis

- This bill affects Coos County only and changes the terms for the Sheriff, the Register of Deeds, Register of Probate, the Treasurer and the County Attorney from two years to four years.
- Rockingham County has already made this change.
- They have the bipartisan support of all nine delegation members, all three commissioners and the NH Association of Counties.
- They believe having a longer term will make these positions a little more attractive to those that are interested in running.
- Having to campaign every other year is disrupting to the job they are trying to do.

Representative Jim Tierney

- These positions have a learning curve and in some cases that can be up to a year.
- This means as soon as they learn the job they have to campaign again to see if they can keep the job.
- A four year term allows them time to come up with and implement ideas to make the office function better.

Leon Rideout – Register of Deeds, Coos County

- This bill will affect his position and he supports.
- He had his own business and was approached to run for the Register of Deeds position.

- As he thought about it, one of the drawbacks was that it is only a 2 year term which does not provide a lot of job security.
- He decided to run but it took a full 18 months before he was comfortable with the job.
- At that time he had to start campaigning again which was disruptive to the office.
- The constant changing and campaigning is stressful for the employees.
- He believes the two year term may be hindering qualified people from running for these positions.

Kate Horgan – NH Municipal Association

- HB 1345 will bring Coos County's constitutional officers in line with the four-year terms that are in Rockingham County.
- These positions are primarily administrative positions for the function of the County.
- Constituents would benefit from consistency in these offices.
- Requiring these positions to immediately begin campaign for re-election takes away from the services these officials can provide to the public.
- Rockingham County has experienced success with this change.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None

TJM

Date Hearing Report completed: May 6, 2024