TESTIMONY OF THE

CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS

TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

ON HOUSE BILL NO. 32

RELATING TO ELECTIONS

January 29, 2013

Chair Rhoads and members of the House Committee on Judiciary, thank you for the opportunity to provide technical comments regarding House Bill No. 32. The purpose of this bill is to require the Chief Election Officer to establish procedures to select a letter of the alphabet by lot and arrange candidate names on ballots in alphabetical order of the last names, beginning with the randomly selected letter.

We take no position on this bill, as it is a matter of policy, but we offer the following comments: Various jurisdictions arrange candidate names in a variety of ways, such as the following: (1) all 26 letters of the alphabet being randomly organized (Oregon); (2) on a rotational basis between districts, in addition to the randomization of all letters of the alphabet throughout the name (California); (3) on the basis of which party received the most votes at that last gubernatorial elections (Connecticut); and (4) on the basis of when the nomination papers were filed, with a lottery system as a tie breaker (Illinois). Each system has its advocates and numerous studies have been conducted debating the nuances of ballot placement and whether it ultimately makes a difference.

In the end, if the Legislature chooses to change the arrangement of candidate names on the ballot, we would ask that the modifications factor in issues of implementation.

For example, the current bill's provision of randomly selecting a letter of the alphabet and then arranging names in alphabetical order of the last names, beginning with the selected letter, appears to work as follows:

1.   The letter Z is randomly selected.

2.   The name ZIEGLER, Thomas would come first, then ZIFF, John.

3.   After the Zs were exhausted, we would go to the A's and organize the names alphabetically (i.e. ABE, Timothy, then ADAMs, Lindsay, and so on).

4.   We would then proceed to B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, and Y.

Such a system could be easily implemented and with appropriate candidate/voter education could mitigate any candidate/voter confusion.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 32.