

**Testimony Submitted to the  
Government Administration & Elections Committee Public Hearing  
February 22, 2021  
by Martin E. Cobern Ph.D.**

Honorable members of the GAE Committee, please accept this testimony in support of House Joint Resolution No. 58 (HJ 58) ***Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting*** and in support of House Joint Resolution No. 59 (HJ 59) ***Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting***.

I have lived in Cheshire for 40 years, and vote in the 16<sup>th</sup> State Senate District, which is represented by Senator Rob Sampson, a Ranking Member on this committee.

We are all privileged to live in this glorious Republic, or representative democracy. The fundamental mechanism for determining our leaders and our policies, both national and local, is the ballot. This was recognized by the Founders and in the ensuing centuries the franchise has been broadened by the 15<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Amendments.

This past November, the people of the United States held an election that was the largest and “most secure in American history.”<sup>1</sup> The results were certified by Secretaries of State and Governors (of both parties) in all fifty states. Numerous challenges to the results were rejected by courts at every level up to and including a **unanimous** Supreme Court. In **none** of these cases were **any** claims of fraud even alleged<sup>2</sup>.

These results were produced in the midst of our worst pandemic in a century thanks to the flexibility and creativity of governors and legislatures of both parties across the country, including here in Connecticut. We learned from this extreme example that Americans prize their franchise and will make **extraordinary** efforts to cast their ballots.

In the 2020 CT General Election, 650,000 of our citizens voted securely by absentee ballot, which allowed them to vote early on their own schedules. Connecticut's record breaking **80% voter turnout** in the 2020 General Election would not have been possible during the pandemic without the expanded absentee ballot voting. Furthermore, **73% of Connecticut voters** support giving all voters the option to vote by absentee ballot without needing an excuse<sup>3</sup>. Many states offer “no excuse” mail-in voting, including six states with all-mail elections.<sup>4</sup> In addition, 43 states offer in-person early voting options<sup>4</sup>. Connecticut thus lags behind most of the nation. Many voters need to work multiple jobs just to feed and house their families and may not be able to afford to lose a day’s pay in order to vote. **Nearly 80% of Connecticut voters** support early voting.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cisa.gov/news/2020/11/12/joint-statement-elections-infrastructure-government-coordinating-council-election>

<sup>2</sup> <https://time.com/5914377/donald-trump-no-evidence-fraud/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Press-Releases/2021-Press-Releases/Poll-of-Connecticut-Voters-Shows-Broad>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/early-voting-in-state-elections.aspx>

We should take this lesson to heart and give **all Connecticut voters** the opportunity to vote more easily. Among the means that were proven effective are the two in question:

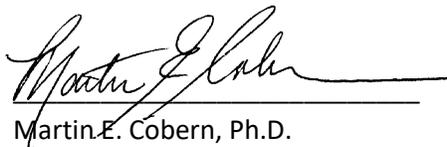
- “No excuse” vote-by-mail, including drop boxes for these ballots;
- Early in-person voting;

I am aware that some do not share my view and have raised objections that these measures might lead to “voter fraud.” According to the exhaustive study conducted by the Heritage Foundation<sup>5</sup>, out of the **billions** of ballots cast in all elections since 1979:

- There have been a total of **971 proven cases** of voter fraud of all types and **820 convictions**.
- Of these, only **213** involved **absentee ballots**, with **148 convictions**, and only **5 in 2020**.

Given these minuscule percentages, compared with the **tens of thousands** who are disenfranchised by overly burdensome and often discriminatory regulations, I urge the Legislature to put partisanship aside and take this step toward unifying our country by supporting the extension of this most basic and fundamental right.

Submitted by:



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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.heritage.org/voterfraud/search?combine=&state=All&year=&case\\_type=All&fraud\\_type=All&page=0](https://www.heritage.org/voterfraud/search?combine=&state=All&year=&case_type=All&fraud_type=All&page=0)