

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Monday, February 22

House Joint Resolution No. 58 (HJ 58): Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting - Support

House Joint Resolution No. 59 (HJ 59) Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting - Support

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Thomas Connolly and I offer the following testimony in support of House Joint Resolution 58: Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting and House Joint Resolution 59: Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting.

Since the attack on our national Capitol on Jan. 6 I have continued to try to process what happened. I am 76 years old and I always voted. I now realize I took for granted the peaceful transference of power once election results have been certified. What happened on Jan. 6th was an attack on our very democracy. The right to vote and accessibility to voting for all is at the very heart of our democracy.

The pandemic, as horrible as it is, demonstrated how voting in CT can be expanded through absentee ballot. But this was just a temporary reform. The truth is that despite these temporary reforms, Connecticut still lags behind our neighbors and states across the country when it comes to voter access. The time is now for all members of the Connecticut General Assembly to support these voting rights expansions:

1. A constitutional amendment to allow all registered voters to vote by absentee ballot without an "excuse".
2. A constitutional amendment to allow early, in-person voting.
3. Legislation to implement automatic voter registration (AVR) beyond the Dept. of Motor Vehicles to other state agencies and to update the online voter registration (OVR) system.
4. Legislation to restore voting rights to individuals on parole.
5. Legislation to allow for absentee ballots to be counted early, and for secure ballot drop boxes.

In addition to amending the state constitution to expand absentee ballot voting and to enact early voting, it's also time for Connecticut to pass automatic voter registration (AVR) into law. This will help hundreds of thousands of new voters automatically register with an opt out. By reducing paperwork and streamlining the process of voter registration when residents interact with state agencies, AVR will allow Connecticut to modernize our elections and keep our voter rolls up to date, while ultimately saving taxpayer dollars.

Restoring voting rights for individuals on parole is an issue that strikes at the heart of social and racial justice. Stripping the right to vote from those on parole is an act of disenfranchisement that has disproportionately impacted communities of color in Connecticut for far too long.

I want to thank you for hearing my testimony. I ask you to support House Joint Resolution 58 and House Joint Resolution 59.

Thomas Connolly
West Hartford