

Testimony for the Virtual Listening Session February 22, 2021 to Discuss House Joint Resolution No. 58 (HJ 58), A Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting; and House Joint Resolution No. 59 (HJ 59), A Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting.

February 18, 2021

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Haskell, Representative Winkler, Senator Sampson, Representative France and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Veronica T. DeLandro and I live in New Britain. I gave a written testimony in July Regarding LCO No. 3576, An Act Concerning Absentee Voting at the 2020 State Election and Election Day Registration. Thank you for your support to ensure CT residents had the ability to vote by way of absentee ballot or in-person during the 2020 primaries and the general election.

The purpose of this email is to ask for your support for HJ58 (Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting) and HJ59 (Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to allow for Early Voting).

When COVID-19 hit voters statewide, members of the legislature, Governor Lamont and Secretary Merrill jumped into action to safeguard voting rights and ensure that voting would be safe, secure and accessible throughout the pandemic. The Governor had to sign an executive order to allow all eligible CT residents vote absentee in the 2020 August Primaries.

The truth is that despite these temporary reforms, Connecticut still lags behind our neighbors states across the country when it comes to voter access. We have some of the strictest voting laws in the country. Absentee voting is restricted to specific situations. 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 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.

These steps are common sense, bipartisan and long overdue. The Connecticut Constitution MUST be amended to ensure increased voting accessibility for all state residents. These changes will make Connecticut a national leader when it comes to voter access and voting rights.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Veronica T. DeLandro
New Britain, CT