

I support both of these bills to bring Connecticut voting laws into the Twenty-First Century. We should no longer be one of only 11 states in the US lacking early voting or no excuse absentee voting. We can see from other states that such policies impressively increase voter turnout. Facts I've found: a record 36 million people in the 39 early voting states chose to cast their ballot early in the 2018 midterm elections. The increase in early voting coincided with a large increase in overall voter turnout. In the 2018 midterm elections, over 47 percent of eligible voters voted, up from a 36.7 percent turnout in 2014. In 2020, those numbers were even larger.

Connecticut's Secretary of the State Denise Merrill has been a strong proponent for this constitutional change. "We should continue to remove barriers to Connecticut voters exercising their most fundamental right to vote by joining the overwhelming majority of states that allow their voters to cast a ballot before Election Day," she said in an interview with The Connecticut Post. "This popular, common-sense election reform will help ensure that not only can every Connecticut citizen easily register, but that every registered voter can conveniently vote."

As Secretary Merrill stressed, passing this constitutional amendment is beyond a question of convenience, these bills would help protect our

most basic right of suffrage. This protection is especially important for voters of color who vote early at a high rate. In 2012, a federal court struck down the rollback of early voting laws in Florida. The ruling asserted that “a dramatic reduction in the form of voting that is disproportionately used by African-Americans would make it materially more difficult for some minority voters to cast a ballot than under the prior law.”

It is up to us to ensure that our state does not have these limited voting opportunities, too. Our friends and neighbors, our teachers and hairdressers, should not have to choose between their civic and personal responsibilities. This is why I support this legislation, to help protect the voting rights in our great state.

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