



Testimony in Support of

House Joint Resolution No. 58: Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting;

House Joint Resolution No. 59: Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting

S.B. No. 901 (Raised): An Act Extending to June 30, 2021, Changes Implemented for the 2020 State Election as a Result of COVID-19.

H.B. No. 6464 (Raised): An Act Extending to May 31, 2021, Several Changes Implemented for the 2020 State Election as a Result of COVID-19

John Erlingheuser, AARP Connecticut
Government Administration and Elections Committee • Monday, February 22, 2021

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of 38 million nationwide and approximately 600,000 in Connecticut. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families.

Honorable Chairs, Ranking Members and members of the GAE Committee, my name is John Erlingheuser and I am the Advocacy and Community Outreach Director for AARP in Connecticut. I am also a former Registrar of Voters, having served the City of Ansonia for 16 years. The right to vote is among the most basic of all civic and Constitutional rights. Recent elections, however, have revealed many flaws and practices that make it more difficult for citizens to vote. These include registration impediments, long lines, lack of early voting opportunities, inadequate facilities, equipment, and staff at polling places, and language barriers, among others.

AARP believes that policies should be enacted that encourage and promote maximum participation in the electoral process. Connecticut should adopt voter registration and voting systems and procedures that expand the range of voting choices for all residents. Two of the major policy changes that should be adopted include no-excuse absentee voting by mail and allowing early voting (including no-excuse absentee in-person voting).

House Joint Resolutions No. 58 and No. 59 would begin the process of facilitating those changes. Public opinion surveys show that both older and younger voters support these expanded voting options and we should give voters the right to determine if we should change our constitution to begin the process of bringing Connecticut into line with the overwhelming majority of other states that allow no excuse absentee voting and in person early voting. The 2020 electoral experience in Connecticut demonstrates the popularity, safety, and security of expanded voting options.

AARP also supports S.B. No. 901 and H.B. No. 6464. Both of these bills would simply extend the changes that were due to the ongoing Covid 19 Pandemic that were made for the 2020 elections and extend them for several months. This temporary extension would accommodate the various special elections that are taking place as well as the several towns that have May municipal elections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that people over 65 years of age, and those with serious health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease seem to be at highest risk for severe disease and even death from COVID-19 related illness. It would be critical to the health and safety of voters to continue these common sense public health measures.

Thank you for your time and efforts. I can be reached at jerlingheuser@aarp.org.