

8 Valley Road
Bethany, CT 06524
22 February 2021

Government Administration & Elections Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Re: SB 901 - An Act Extending to June 30, 2021, Changes Implemented for the 2020 State
Election as a Result of COVID-19

HB 6464 - An Act Extending to May 31, 2021, Several Changes Implemented for the 2020
State Election as a Result of COVID-19

HJ 58 - Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse
Absentee Voting

HJ 59 - Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early
Voting

Members of the Committee:

1) Extending election changes because of COVID-19

I write to support the bills listed above. I tried to pick apart the differences between SB 901 and HB 6464, beyond the difference in dates. I was not able to get far in my understanding, and my only concern is that the changes in elections that we had in 2020 be extended for the May 3, 2021 municipal elections. Please advance one of those two bills to the entire Assembly for approval as soon as possible.

Although it is possible for the Governor to declare an extension of emergency powers beyond April, the May towns should have the support of legislature also.

I work for the Town of Woodbridge and live in Bethany. These are two of the four towns that regularly hold municipal elections on the first Monday of May in odd-numbered years. In Bethany I served as elections moderator for the August 2020 Presidential Preference and state primaries and in Election Day Registration for the November 2020 elections. I have been asked to work on EDR this May, and will probably be standing by as a backup for the moderator.

Throughout the 2020 election season, as I helped our registrars prepare for those events, I also watched the town clerk's office processing the additional Absentee Ballots through two power outages in August and the usual frantic activity before the Presidential election. The town clerk depended on regular volunteer time from her college-age granddaughter. It is extra work for everyone, but I do not believe our town officials would deny our residents the opportunity to vote safely.

I have high hopes that public health conditions will be better in May, but there will still be a significant number of voters in town who will need to use Absentee Ballots for other than the usual four reasons.

2) Resolutions to amend the state Constitution

I am also a member of the League of Women Voters of Connecticut and support both resolutions listed above. Both will ease access for legal electors to exercise their right to vote. Both proposed amendments would lift some restrictions and allow legislature to determine the details of expanded Absentee Ballot usage and of in-person Early Voting.

It will be years between the time we can vote on such amendments and the time that legislature can work out the details. So there is no need at this time to argue (for example) how long the Early Voting period should be. There is also time to consider what additional resources the towns will need to make voting more accessible to their people

Please advance both resolutions to the entire Assembly for approval.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Very truly yours,
Pua Ford

Cc: Senator Jorge Cabrera
Representative Lezlye Zupkus
Paula Cofrancesco, First Selectmen, Bethany
Beth Heller, First Selectmen, Woodbridge
League of Women Voters of CT