

Dear GAE Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Flexer and Rep. Fox, Vice Chairs Sen. Haskell and Rep. Thomas, and Ranking Members Sen. Sampson and Rep. Mastrofrancesco and Members of the GAE Committee,

Let us start by respectfully asking why Connecticut has some of the most restrictive statutes surrounding the privilege of voting? Why must we restrict voting to Election Day? We are one of only 7 states (MO, SC, NH, AL, KY, MS) that prevents us from casting our votes in advance of Election Day. It's an antiquated process that needs updating.

For years we have listened to my family and friends across the country who are able to vote easily ahead of Election Day. They are always surprised to hear Connecticut is stuck in a time warp. We are needlessly the exception when we shouldn't be.

Clearly the expansion of absentee ballots in Connecticut during the pandemic was successful, extremely safe, and very convenient. Voter turnout was high - 79.7%. That should reassure everyone that this is a sensible and essential change in today's world.

In recent years, with older parents nearing and entering their 90's, we were always surprised by how restrictive the voting process was. My parents were healthy enough that they were unable to justify requesting an absentee ballot, yet getting them to the polls was tremendously challenging, inconvenient, and unnecessary, particularly on days with inclement weather, not uncommon in Connecticut in November or the January runoffs.

Even still there were some limitations with the absentee ballot process during the pandemic. My 94-year-old mother, who wanted me to drop her completed ballot in the ballot box, was forced to come with me to drop it off herself, unless I was willing to drop it off at her Town Hall to have it verified. This was her first trip out since the start of the pandemic in February 2020. During a pandemic I was avoiding entering buildings, so the only option was to take her with me to the ballot box or forgo her vote - - and that certainly was not an option.

We firmly support early voting and no excuse absentee voting. Connecticut, it's time we join other states and make the voting process much more accommodating for all of us. The ballot boxes are secure. If we were able to successfully accomplish absentee voting during a pandemic, we can certainly make this permanent. We deserve the option to vote in advance of Election Day.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy and Marc Halpert
Fairfield