

Jim Jinks

Town Councilor, Cheshire, CT

2020 Candidate for State Representative, 90th District (Cheshire, Wallingford)

February 19, 2021

Testimony in support of H.J. 58 & H.J. 59

To: Chairperson Mae Flexer, Chairperson Daniel Fox, Vice Chairperson Will Haskell, Vice Chairperson Stephanie Thomas and Ranking Members and Members.

My name is Jim Jinks. I serve as a town councilor in Cheshire, CT and I was the Democratic candidate for state representative in the 90th District in 2020. I'm writing in support of H.J. 58 and H.J. 59, resolutions proposing State Constitution amendments allowing for "no excuse" absentee ballots and early voting, respectively.

The 2020 election proved that Connecticut voters, like those in thirty-five other states, are ready for no excuse absentee and early voting. Our 2020 election proved that no excuse absentee/mail-in voting is safe and secure. In Wallingford, for example, the Mayor initially resisted allowing 24/7 access to the state-provided absentee ballot drop boxes. Specifically, the Mayor was reluctant to place the drop boxes outside of the town hall and even the police station; where the public could drop off their absentee ballot at a time that was convenient for them, as intended. The Mayor's concerns had to do with security and the risk of vandalism. Similar concerns were expressed by Republican legislative members in 2020, prior to and after the distribution of the ballot drop boxes. But in Wallingford (and statewide) Election Day came and went and there were little to no reported incidents of vandalism related to the absentee ballot drop boxes.

As many of you are probably aware, the 90th District was the closest state-level race in 2020. Following some confusion on election night, due to the Wallingford town clerk's election night reporting error, the race went to an automatic recount and ultimately the difference in the race was only seven votes (out of over 14,000 votes cast.) The turnout in Cheshire and Wallingford was very high (over 86% in both towns.) Some would think with such high turnout and over a third of ballots cast being absentee (approx. 4,900 in Cheshire and Wallingford), there would be a potential for "fraud" or "voting irregularities." After getting hundreds of signatures just to get on the ballot. Then putting my life on hold and putting my family through the rigors of about five months campaigning (in the middle of a global pandemic, no less) and ending-up losing by only seven votes, I can safely say (with the possible exception of our Secretary of the State) I was perhaps the one most interested in whether or not we can/should have faith in absentee/mail-in voting in Connecticut. But I observed much of the recount. I observed the way absentee/mail-in ballots were carefully handled and counted by the numerous Cheshire and Wallingford volunteers. I can say without reservation, we can and should have faith and trust in no excuse absentee/mail-in voting in our state.

Please support H.J. 58 and H.J. 59. Connecticut voters should have every opportunity to vote in our elections. In fact, polling indicates the vast majority of Connecticut voters support no excuse absentee/mail-in and early voting.* The concerns over the safety, security and accuracy of the vote are overblown (to be generous) and have been proven false in Connecticut and across the country. This is a straightforward issue and expanding voting should be bipartisan. We are in a democracy, after all. No excuse absentee/mail-in and early voting measures are good policy and good politics.

Thank you.

Jim Jinks, Town Councilor, Cheshire, CT.

* [Secretary Of The State: Public Wants Early Voting, No-Excuse Absentee | Connecticut Public Radio \(wnpr.org\)](https://www.wnpr.org/news/secretary-of-the-state-public-wants-early-voting-no-excuse-absentee)