

Testimony in support of HJ58 (NEAV) & HJ59 (EV) ballot resolutions

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, ranking members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco and distinguished Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

I am writing in favor of HJ58 and HJ59, the resolutions proposing constitutional amendments to allow no-excuse absentee and early voting in Connecticut.

Why should Connecticut be one of only seven states that does not allow either early voting or no-excuse absentee voting? We should be making it easier, not more difficult, to vote by removing unnecessary obstacles.

No-excuse absentee voting was wildly popular last year, with one-third of all ballots cast absentee. Despite the logistical challenges, state and local election officials came through with flying colors. Expanded access to absentee voting led to record-breaking voter participation rates across the state. Polls show that both EV and NEAV enjoy overwhelming public support from Connecticut voters, regardless of party affiliation.

I took advantage of NEAV last year and was grateful to have this available so that I didn't feel that I had to place my health at risk just to exercise my right to vote.

Further, to strengthen our democracy we need to do more than make it easier to vote; we need to ensure that winning candidates better reflect the will of the majority. **That's what Ranked Choice Voting offers, and it's why I'm also asking you to vote HB-5884, the Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Ranked Choice Voting, out of your committee.** The respected and non-partisan American Academy of Arts and Sciences recommended RCV in its report, Reinventing Democracy for the 21st Century. Leading conservative voices like Norm Ornstein and the late Senator John McCain endorse Ranked Choice Voting.

Thank you for considering these important voting and election reforms.

Sincerely,

Ken Merrifield
Glastonbury