

I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to provide testimony for Resolutions 58 and 59 allowing for early access and no excuse absentee voting.

I have been interested in politics and involved in political events most of my adult life. While in college, I entered the live event market and worked as a technician for political rallies, speeches, and major party conventions. I would travel to New Hampshire and be a part of their primary season. In my twenties, I designed events for four presidents and a number of candidates on both parties. I am currently writing this testimony with my Certificate of Appreciation from the White House Communication Agency on the wall.

However, despite being one of the most involved and informed voters in my age group, I didn't actually cast my first ballot until I was in my thirties. I am not proud of that fact, but I am not ashamed of it either. I am writing this not because my story is unique or interesting, but because it is horrifyingly commonplace. I was one of those pesky young voters that couldn't be relied on to participate in democracy. It's often brushed off as irresponsibility or immaturity, but I think there are more concrete challenges that I faced.

One of the biggest hurdles for me personally was the time expense of voting. I was an hourly employee, and often times I was freelance or self employed. This presented two challenges, first was one of money. I was entitled by law time to vote but that came at a very real financial expense. Taking a few hours off was a good chunk of change at a time when I was living paycheck to paycheck. Because of my business, I couldn't make up the hours later, so that money was lost. Also, for me, election day was often one of the more lucrative and busy days of the year and it wasn't unheard of to work from before polls opened to after a winner was declared.

The second hurdle was that of my career, as a freelance technician there is a lot of pressure to say yes whenever a job is offered, especially early in my career. I had to maintain relationships and every day felt like I had to prove myself. Telling a potential employer no, or that I was going to be late felt like a death knell to that opportunity, because somebody else might have said yes. At that age, my career felt more important than casting a ballot in a solidly blue state.

I fully admit I could have tried harder to vote, I should have had the confidence to tell my employers I needed time. Some years if I had enough notice, I may have applied for an excused absentee ballot. But I don't think that is the point, democracy shouldn't be a sacrifice to participate in. My story is not just for youth, it's also for any gig-based employee, it's for hourly part time employees who can't afford to take a few hours off work to go stand in a line somewhere.

Now, I am in a place in my career that I have no problem participating in elections. I am salaried, I have stable employment. I now have the ability to say to my employer that I am going miss a few hours because I need to vote and it does not cost me any money or anxiety. I am grateful for that, but I also think that my voice isn't any more important than the people who don't have that privilege.

Democracy is strongest when everyone's voice is heard. I see these two resolutions as a way of leveling the playing field, allowing more people to participate in the direction of this great state and this nation. It allows young people in situations like mine the ability to vote without risk, but it allows people with other types of financial challenges, transportation challenges, family challenges to be able to make a difference.

Thank you for your time,

Jason Perry

21 Juhasz Rd

Norwalk CT 06854