

**Government Administration and Elections Committee**

**Monday, February 22**

**House Joint Resolution No. 58 (HJ 58): Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting - Support**

**House Joint Resolution No. 59 (HJ 59) Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting - Support**

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

My name is Patrice Peterson and I offer the following testimony in support of House Joint Resolution 58: Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit No-Excuse Absentee Voting and House Joint Resolution 59: Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Permit Early Voting.

I speak in support of this bill as both a Chapter Officer for CSEA SEIU 2001 Retiree Council 400 and as the past Registrar of Voters in West Hartford.

The Retiree Council 400 represents over 12,000 retired state employees; over 10,000 of which live in Connecticut. CSEA recently conducted a survey in June 2020 and February 2021 of Retirees concerning the issue of voting and no excuse absentee voting. Here's what we found:

- In a survey of our membership taken last week, 81% of our membership supported No-Excuse Absentee voting.
- In our June survey 65.2% of those responding said they were highly likely to vote by No-Excuse Absentee Voting and 13.2% said they were somewhat likely to vote absentee.
- We found in our most recent survey that 66% did vote absentee. It is safe to say that of the 10,000 Connecticut based Retirees 6,500 voted absentee.
- In a statistical analysis of the surveys the margin of error has a 95% confidence level with a 3% plus or minus margin of error for both surveys. As a result, we are confident in the conclusion that this is a critically important issue for Connecticut seniors.
- Results of both surveys indicated that those who support No Excuse Absentee Voting were Republican, Democrats and Independents showing us that this is not a political issue.

It is well accepted that as a demographic, older citizens take their responsibility to vote very seriously and do vote in large numbers. 98% of those who answered our survey voted in the November election. This group must not be ignored. This is an issue of safety and accessibility for Connecticut's older citizens.

As a Registrar of Voters, I had the experience of seeing the full impact of No-Excuse Absentee Voting in last year's primary and general election. In my hometown, West Hartford, we had almost 50% of total electors vote absentee. That translates to over 19,000 people who cast their vote by absentee ballot. West Hartford had over an 87 % turnout rate. We heard from thousands of citizens who talked about safety at the polls, that being able to vote absentee gave them a chance to study a ballot to make better informed decisions, that due to the severe limitations of voting on one day during certain hours had prevented those with multiple jobs, overtime work shifts and work schedules from voting in the past, that long lines had prevented many with time constraints or physical challenges from voting in the past. It is clear that so many who may have been frustrated by the voting limits in the past were anxious to avail themselves of absentee voting as was allowed last year. I heard directly of the importance of expanding voting opportunities to so many citizens.

It is past time to recognize the needs of the citizens of Connecticut and expand voting to include both early voting and no excuse absentee voting.

Especially on behalf of the retired and older voters I ask for you to support both House Joint Resolution 58 and 59. Do not continue to limit our ability to cast a ballot just due to being the land of steady habits. Thank you for listening. I am happy to answer any questions.

Patrice Peterson  
West Hartford