

My name is Nerlyn Pierson and I live in Greenwich, CT. I am writing to you in support of HJ58 and HJ59 to allow early voting and no-excuse absentee ballot voting in Connecticut.

The idea of amending constitutions periodically and by the people dates back to Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson once wrote that we should “provide in our constitution for its revision at stated periods.”

Jefferson argued that, “each generation” should have the “solemn opportunity” to update the constitution “every nineteen or twenty years,” thus allowing it to “be handed on, with periodical repairs, from generation to generation, to the end of time.”

The drafters of the Connecticut Constitution took this advice to heart and ensured during the 1965 constitutional convention that the Connecticut Constitution could be amended not only (at least once) every 20 years as set forth in Article XIII of the Connecticut Constitution, but also through a legislatively referred constitutional amendment as set forth in Article XII of the Connecticut Constitution.

HJ58 and HJ59 grants the people of Connecticut with a “solemn opportunity” to update the Connecticut Constitution should we, the people, decide early voting and no-excuse absentee is a warranted amendment to our constitution.

There are many advocates for early voting and no-excuse absentee and there are those who do not believe it is necessary. Although I believe early voting and no-excuse absentee voting is important and a boon to our democracy, I am not writing to highlight the benefits of these two voting reforms. Rather, I am writing to advocate for the choice to vote on whether we as a state want early voting and no-excuse absentee voting. The people of Connecticut should be the ones who decide if the existing state constitution, drafted more than 50 years ago, is outdated and whether the times require a new constitutional measure to meet our current world order and societal needs and demands.

We, the people, should be given the “solemn opportunity” to make that choice. This “choice” is what Thomas Jefferson advocated for and what the drafters of our state constitution envisioned. It is explicit from Article XII and, especially, Article XIII of the Connecticut Constitution, that the drafters of the Connecticut Constitution anticipated “periodic repairs” to the constitution, from time to time, by each generation. As such, our state legislators should not stand in the way and block proposals that grant the people of Connecticut that opportunity. Our state legislators should want to hear from the people and empower them with the ability to choose and amend the path, when necessary, of how their state government is structured and their rights are allocated. Our legislators should let the people of Connecticut decide if a constitutional amendment is warranted. Let’s have a “People’s Vote” on the matter.

This should not be a partisan issue. As such, I urge each of the committee members and the state legislator to vote in favor of HJ58 and HJ59.

Thank you,

Nerlyn Pierson
310 Stanwich Road, Greenwich, CT