

# Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.

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## Written Testimony

Anna M. Posniak, Windsor Town Clerk and President

Connecticut Town Clerks Association

**HJ 59, Resolution Approving an Amendment to State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting**

**HJ-58, Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting**

**HB 6464, An Act Extending to May 31, 2021, Several Changes Implemented for the 2020 State Election as a Result of COVID-19**

**SB 901, An Act Extending to June 30, 2021, Changes Implemented for the 2020 State Election as a Result of COVID-19**

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Monday, February 22, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco, and the distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee my name is Anna Posniak, Windsor Town Clerk and President of the Connecticut Town Clerks Association (CTCA).

For years, the Connecticut Town Clerks Association has supported modernizing our state's election system with early in-person voting by tabulator as a means to give voters more flexibility and convenience in casting their ballot. The members of CTCA are entrusted with numerous election related responsibilities. Our role is vital in ensuring the integrity, fairness and transparency of all Connecticut elections. We understand and sympathize with the voter's desire to cast a ballot while not compromising their health during the worldwide pandemic.

With the November election, town clerks successfully issued over 665,000 no-excuse absentee ballots. Our ability to successfully administer the absentee ballot process was largely due to federal and private grants funds. Additionally, with many town halls closed to the public, town clerks had the ability to utilize unused meeting rooms and vaults to process and safely store

absentee ballots. Unfortunately, the much-needed funds and physical office space will present a serious dilemma for cities and towns as they administer no-excuse absentee voting in a post-COVID world.

CTCA strongly supports a Constitutional amendment that would expand both absentee voting in conjunction with early in-person voting by tabulator on designated days leading up to the election. With an expansion of both these methods along with Election Day voting, no one method would bear the burden because voting would be spread over all three methods.

In addition, CTCA strongly recommends the creation of a legislative task force to examine the changes to statute, procedures, funding and technology upgrades necessary to implement no-excuse absentee voting and early in-person voting by tabulator in a post-COVID world. This task force needs to be approved this session and begin their work immediately in anticipation of the voters' approval of the Constitutional questions on a November ballot in 2022. This task force needs to move on a parallel track to these two Constitutional questions, so the 2023 General Assembly has recommendations ready to be acted upon that ensure the greatest efficiencies and securities are ready to be implemented.

By modernizing our elections, the voters of our state will have the greatest access to the ballot to have their voice heard and counted.

With the public health emergency still a concern for voters, CTCA supports legislation to allow voters to request an absentee ballot for reason of COVID-19 for any election, primary or referendum held this Spring.

#### **HB 6464, An Act Extending to May 31, 2021, Several Changes Implemented for the 2020 State Election as a Result of COVID-19**

CTCA asks for consideration of the following amendment in HB 6464:

Under Section 4, subsection 9(g)(2)(B) we support the elimination of a police escort for the retrieval of absentee ballot from any drop box not located outside the building where the municipal clerk's office is located. The necessity of a police escort created undue time delays as police officers in understaffed police departments were busy on emergency calls. CTCA supports the requirement of having a second person present to maintain the integrity of election, however, the second party may simply be another election official.

#### **SB 901, An Act Extending to June 30, 2021, Changes Implemented for the 2020 State Election As A Result of COVID-19**

CTCA asks for consideration of the following amendment to SB 901:

In section 4 subsection 9(g)(2)(B) we again ask to remove the requirement for a police escort for the retrieval of absentee ballots from any drop box not located outside the building where the municipal clerk's office is located. In its place add language to require a second election official to be present whenever absentee ballots are retrieved from drop boxes not located outside of town hall. The necessity of a police escort created undue time delays as police officers in understaffed police departments were busy on emergency calls. CTCA fully supports the requirement of having a second person present to maintain the integrity of election, however, the second party may simply be another election official.

In section 6 subsection (e)(2)(A)(i), CTCA respectfully seeks a clarification as to the intent of the legislature with respect to curing any defects on absentee ballots ahead of Election Day. CTCA has concerns that the tight timeframe would lead to logistical issues with contacting all voters consistently. CTCA strongly believes that every voter should receive equal protection under the law.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony, I would be glad to answer any questions.