

Jim Sidway
211 Lum Lot Road
Southbury, CT 06488

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RE: Testimony in support of HJ58 (NEAV) & HJ59 (EV)

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

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

Connecticut is one of only seven states that does not allow early voting, no-excuse absentee voting or vote-by-mail, making it more difficult to vote here than in the vast majority of the nation. No-excuse absentee voting was wildly popular last year, with one-third of all ballots cast absentee, and no evidence of the widespread voter fraud that some were concerned about. 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 of all affiliations, and not just during times of pandemic.

If we say that voting is a right, and not a privilege, we need to make it easier to vote, which is why I am asking you to vote both resolutions favorably out of the GAE Committee. Note: In addition to being the right thing to do NEAV is also the 'green' thing to do. Being able to vote by mail will reduce the contribution to greenhouse gases created by folks driving to and from their polling places.

However, I believe that strengthening our representative democracy requires more than making it easier to vote; it requires that winning candidates better reflect the will of the majority. That's the benefit of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), and why I urge you to raise HB-5884, the Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Ranked Choice Voting. A similar bill was voted out of your Committee in 2019, passed the House, and was raised again last year, demonstrating the widespread support that exists among voters and the General Assembly. Here again, RCV comes with potential 'green' benefits because it will eliminate the need for run-off elections which comes with all kinds of added expenses including driving to and from polling places.

Thank you for considering these important voting and election reforms.

Sincerely,

James Sidway
Southbury