

Dear Members of the GAE Committee:

Like 650,000 Connecticut residents, I voted by Absentee Ballot last November. I was grateful to vote from the safety of my home and deposit my ballot in the drop box at my town hall. I was shocked to learn this method of voting is not available in future elections.

Connecticut has some of the most restrictive voting laws in the nation built into its constitution. Because of the pandemic, Gov. Lamont signed an executive order allowing all registered voters in Connecticut to vote absentee and by extension, vote early because absentee ballots could be returned before Election Day in 2020. This effort was so successful that last year 35% of ballots cast were by absentee, compared to the 4% who voted absentee in previous elections and the absentee ballot rejection rate was less than 1%, the lowest in history, according to Secretary of the State, Denise Merrill.

Secretary Merrill's office conducted a poll in January that found a majority of Connecticut voters favor early and no-excuse absentee voting. Bills H.J. No. 58 and H.J. 59 address those voting reforms. I urge you to support these bills and vote them out of committee. It's time to give Connecticut residents the choices they deserve when they vote.

Thank you for your consideration of these remarks.

*Susan R. Sokoloski
South Glastonbury, CT*