

IN SUPPORT OF:

House Joint Resolutions

- **58 PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING.**
- **59 APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW FOR EARLY VOTING.**

Co-Chairs Senator Flexer and Representative Fox, Vice Chairs Senator Haskell and Representative Thomas, Ranking Members Senator Sampson and Representative Mastrofrancesco, and to the honorable members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

Thank you for your service to our state and your communities during these trying times, and for your commitment to human rights, fundamental freedoms, and to our state and municipalities holding legitimate elections by universal suffrage.

I applaud those of you who voted to boost public safety, public health, and peace of mind for Connecticut voters in 2020. Thanks in part to you, voters turned out in record numbers — with more than 1.85 million votes cast, and more than a third of these via absentee ballot (AB) in the November election. It was the first presidential election in which I voted absentee. I followed the instructions in an e-mail from Governor Lamont to obtain an AB application. No Bridgeport political operatives pestered me to apply for one; no, none of them called to see if I had received my AB or if I needed help filling it out and returning it. My AB arrived several weeks ahead of the election. In light of the rising COVID positivity rate heading into the final week of October, I decided to fill in the AB and delivered it to a secure drop box by Fire Station 7. My wife, more courageous than I, opted to mask up and to vote at our polling location on November 3rd.

In Bridgeport, where I live, 72% of registered voters cast a ballot in the 2020 November election – a 29% increase from the prior presidential election (56% turnout in 2016). That's a thrilling development, especially when you look at the dismally low turnout in off-year elections here, when the offices that run the city government and our school board are on the ballot. Take for example the Bridgeport 2019 election: Just 22% of registered voters weighed in. That's not just bad for Bridgeport. It should also be concerning to all taxpayers throughout the state because Bridgeport is effectively a financial ward of the state. But it doesn't have to be.

If we empower more voters in Bridgeport elections – all elections -- just as you, Governor Lamont, and Secretary of State Merrill did in the 2020 election across Connecticut

(A) to be their own controlling agent of their vote

and

(B) to get to choose when and how they will vote, without interference in applying for and/or receiving and/or filling out and/or returning their absentee ballot,

Then we will be well on our way to:

1. Significantly reducing any corrupt absentee-ballot operations of entrenched interests;
2. Significantly decreasing the disenfranchisement of voters who don't turn out because they believe the system is rigged and, as a result, their vote is meaningless.

Sound too good to be true?

I never thought I'd see a 72% voter turnout in Bridgeport in my lifetime.

Let's aim to make our election systems function in ways that grow voter turnout and amplify voters voices and choices.

It's good for our state, our municipalities, and for all of us, especially for those who've been marginalized from claiming the fullness of their sacred place in our living democracy -- through which we still sustain.

According to a recent survey by Common Cause CT, nearly 3 out of 4 Connecticut voters support giving all voters the option to vote via no-excuse absentee ballot, and 8 out of 10 support early voting. I support both. I'm hopeful you will too. Please advance both of these House Joint Resolutions to the full legislature, so that ultimately the voters can decide on these necessary improvements to the Constitution of the State of Connecticut.

Thank you very much for your time and considerations.

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