

To:	Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, ranking members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco and distinguished Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee
From:	John Warburg 180 Spring House Road, Fairfield, CT 06824 Email: <a href="mailto:jwarburg@warbros.com">jwarburg@warbros.com</a> Tel: (203) 229-0640
Date:	February 22, 2021
Re:	Testimony in support of HJ58 (NEAV) & HJ59 (EV) ballot resolutions

I am writing in favor of HJ58 and HJ59, the resolutions proposing constitutional amendments to allow no-excuse absentee and early voting in Connecticut, and I humbly ask you to vote both resolutions favorably out of the GAE Committee.

Voter turnout in Connecticut and across the country has, historically, been embarrassingly low, but expanded access to absentee voting this past November led to record-breaking voter participation in our state. Why would we now want to roll that back? Why would we want to return Connecticut to being one of only seven states that do not allow either early voting or no-excuse absentee voting? Voting is a right, not a privilege, and we should be doing everything possible to make voting easier for everyone. Despite the logistical challenges this past November, our election officials pulled off a near flawless election. We've proven that it can be done and polls clearly show that Connecticut voters, regardless of party affiliation, overwhelmingly support both EV and NEAV.

EV and NEAV are just two ways in which we can make our elections fairer and more democratic. Another important way to strengthen our democracy is to enact Ranked Choice Voting, which is why **I'm also asking you to vote HB-5884, the Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Ranked Choice Voting, out of your committee.** Pasted below is a letter I wrote to the CT Post about RCV, which appeared in their 12/23/20 edition.

Thank you for considering these important voting and election reforms.

John Warburg

CT POST 12/23/20

OPINION

# A better way to run elections

*BY JOHN WARBURG*

I want to express my support for ranked choice voting and encourage readers to ask their legislators to back this important election reform in the Connecticut General Assembly.

We are facing many critical issues in our state and country right now, but there is none more important, in my opinion, than the need for nonpartisan election reform. Because until we change the way we run our elections, we will never see a meaningful change in the hyperpartisanship that is undermining our politics and government. And, without a functional government that is more responsive to voters, it's hard to see how we will ever make significant progress on the broader issues we face.

There are many ways to make our elections more fair and democratic — from nonpartisan redistricting to open primaries to campaign finance reform — but Ranked Choice Voting, or RCV, may be the most powerful and simplest to implement. In races with more than two candidates, RCV allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference. If there is no majority winner in the first vote count, the last place candidate's votes are "eliminated" and the second-choice votes on those ballots are then transferred to the other candidates. This recount is done instantly and normally results in one of the top two finishers winning a majority. If not, the process is repeated until there is a clear majority winner.

This system ensures that the winning candidate always has majority support; no more candidates winning with only 30 to 40 percent of the vote. It also encourages people to vote for alternate party candidates without worrying that they might be throwing away their vote on a "spoiler" candidate (think Ross Perot in 1992 or Ralph Nader in 2000) or on a candidate that later drops out. And because of the potential importance of second-choice votes, it encourages candidates to reach out to more voters and find more common ground, while discouraging negative campaigning.

RCV is getting a lot of attention and support across the U.S.. Alaska and Maine have adopted it for their state and federal elections, and many municipalities across the country now use it. Also, many leading elected officials and numerous editorial boards have endorsed it.

We may be the "land of steady habits" here in Connecticut, but isn't it time for us to implement election reforms like RCV, so that we can give voters more say and begin to fix our democracy?

John Warburg lives in Fairfield.