

Government Administration and Elections Committee  
Public Hearing - February 22, 2021

**Testimony of Susan L Yolen on behalf of PoliticaCT, in Support of:  
HJ Resolution 58: A Proposal for a State Constitutional Amendment to  
Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting; and  
HJ Resolution 59: A Proposed Amendment to the State Constitution to  
Allow for Early Voting**

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Joint Resolutions 58 and 59.

I am Susan L Yolen, a New Haven resident and a board member of PoliticaCT. I submit this testimony on behalf of our statewide membership-based organization, committed to building a more progressive Connecticut.

Early voting and “no-excuse” absentee voting are long tried-and-true methods for voting elsewhere in the country. For example, in 2004, I spent some time in Pinellas County, Florida knocking on the doors of voters -- where I quickly learned that Florida allowed early voting. In fact, many Floridians we spoke to that October seventeen years ago had already voted. To be honest, coming from Connecticut where there was virtually no flexibility regarding absentee voting and no policy at all permitting early voting, I was surprised by this.

Today, early voting is the norm nationwide. Our state is one of just a handful that has not adopted a policy to permit voters to cast their ballot in advance, rather than hold out a single weekday in November as the sole opportunity to do so.

It is time to modernize our voting laws.

Our Connecticut citizens agree. According to polls, a large, bipartisan majority of state voters favor early voting for a variety of reasons, which are very often work-related. For those without flexibility in their work life or schedule, the ability to vote in person before Election Day will make an enormous positive difference.

Likewise, the ability to vote in our state by means of a “no-excuse” absentee ballot last fall was a step in the direction of increased voting access. My entire family and I took



advantage of this opportunity ourselves, being wary of crowds during the current pandemic. It was a huge relief to have this option. We were not alone. A temporary absentee ballot expansion was necessary given the wide range of individuals concerned about infection who would have been unable to cast a ballot in person if limited to Election Day.

No one should have to fear for their health and well being in order to participate in our democratic process. A permanent policy dealing with absentee ballots will make future gubernatorial executive orders unnecessary in our increasingly uncertain world.

**Thus, PoliticaCT urges adoption of these two resolutions.**

HJ 58 would initiate the process of amending the State Constitution to expand access to an absentee ballot for those who cannot appear on the day set for elections. It does not limit access or require extreme circumstances in order for a voter to qualify to vote absentee. It would however likely continue to require a multi-step application process to receive a ballot.

HJ 59 would also seek to amend the State Constitution to provide for voting in person prior to the day of election. The bill language requires that local presiding election officers count the votes “in an open meeting,” thus ensuring transparency.

Thank you.