



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE DAVID BARAM**  
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**MEMBER**  
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BANKS COMMITTEE

February 14, 2011

Dear Senator Slossberg, Representative Morin and Members of the Government Administration & Elections Committee,

I am Representative David Baram of the 15th Assembly District (Bloomfield/Windsor) and I would like to speak in favor of SB 941 which is essentially the same as House Joint Resolution No.9 submitted by myself and Representative Peggy Sayers. Both Resolutions seek to amend the State Constitution to allow what is commonly known as "No Excuse" Absentee Ballots.

Under present law, registered voters seeking an absentee ballot must provide a valid excuse as to why they cannot vote at their polling location on Election Day. Reasons such as illness, military deployment and travel are considered acceptable under existing law.

Currently however, 30 states offer "no-excuse" absentee voting. No-excuse' absentee voting is a reform whose time has come. We need to promote voter participation and eliminate barriers that deter people from voting. Many factors such as age, physical infirmities, transportation, work schedules and weather conditions prevent people from going to the polling stations to vote. 'No-excuse' absentee ballots provide another opportunity for all residents to vote.

Connecticut Secretary of the State Denise Merrill, the state's chief election official, has previously stated that she also supports the "no-excuse" absentee ballot concept as a way to increase election participation. Voter turnout for the statewide gubernatorial election on November 2, 2010, was only 57.7 percent.

According to a 2010 League of Women Voters study, "no-excuse" absentee ballots would:

- Allow voters to cast their vote when they are able to.
- Allow voters to balance work, family and other interests including their civic duty to vote.
- Decrease barriers, such as time, distance and schedules, to voting.

- Eliminate problems with ballots being cast in the wrong precinct and reduce provisional ballots.
- Reduce lines on election days and eventually could reduce costs by reducing the number of precincts and precinct workers.

Consequently I urge the GAE to support this election reform and give the citizens of Connecticut the opportunity to approve this amendment as an equitable process that promotes full participation.

Respectfully,

David Baram  
State Representative