

GAE Public HRG 3.2.12
Testimony submitted by Kimberly Glassman:

Chairwoman Slossberg, Chairman Morin and members of the GAE committee. Thank you for holding a public hearing on H.B. 5022, H.B. 5024 and H.J. No. 2.

I am asking you to support these three crucial proposals.

Let me start by saying that I am a campaign junkie. I have worked on numerous campaigns, as an unpaid volunteer, an unpaid intern, an organizer and campaign manager. Working in the trenches, trying desperately to turn out voters is one of the toughest jobs a person can do. Yet, we have a passion for it, you and I. Every spring we begin that exhausting and frustrating task again.

Before I moved to Connecticut, I was working for the Indiana Democratic Party. And though politics shouldn't play a role in voter access, it's important to note that it was the policy of the state party to register as many new voters as possible. During the 2012 midterm elections alone my office was able to register nearly 3,000 new voters, many of them college students who had never voted before. We were not after registering Democrats or Independents or Republicans. Our goal was to make sure as many people as possible turned out to vote in the upcoming general election.

H.B. 5022:

Unfortunately, students and those serving in the military are some of the most disenfranchised voters in the United States. When I was working for the Democratic Party, we found that many college students were told they were unable to vote. They were told that state they were living in to attend university for 4+ years was not their permanent residence. They were told that their ballots would be contested. They were told that their voter registration forms were filled out incorrectly. They were told that they had brought the wrong photo identification card to the polls. They were told their polling location had changed (when it hadn't). The opposition, whomever the opposition, was compelled to do whatever and say whatever was needed to thwart a student's ability to cast their vote.

And let us not forget this happens nationwide. Since moving to Connecticut, I have worked on numerous campaigns throughout the state. In Middletown, the students at Wesleyan University faced the same voter suppression just this past municipal election. Many were told that they were ineligible to vote in this state, that their vote would not be counted, that Connecticut was not their place of residence.

We know that these actions go on every election cycle. We know it's wrong. It should also be illegal. Voting is a right to every citizen of this great nation. If we take that away from people, how then can we call this country a democracy? The people who stand in the way of a citizen's right to cast their vote is doing nothing more than undermining what our forefathers risked everything to protect. Voter suppression and voter intimidation is a crime and those who commit

that crime should be punished and penalized accordingly. Therefore, I ask that you support H.B. 5022.

H.B. 5024:

I fully support H.B. 5024. A scenario we're often met with is when a new resident or a student who just settling into their new dormitory in the fall moves into a voting district. Clearly, we want to get them registered to vote. It's a day or two before the deadline to register. They mail in their voter registration form, but it doesn't get filed with the registrar's office in time. Tragic.

Or, we're turning people out to the polls on Election Day and someone says, "I'd like to vote, but I don't think I'm registered." Tragic.

To a layman these may seem like unique situations. But these scenarios are all too common.

People should be able to register to vote online. Additionally, we should have day of registration. What if you move to town on the Monday before Election Day? What if you move to town on Election Day? What if you've just turned 18 and you're now overseas serving in the military to protect this great nation and you haven't registered to receive an absentee ballot? And what if the League of Women Voters or other neighborhood outreach organizations haven't had the ability to reach a low income household? Everybody should be able to vote. It is our job as Americans to ensure that we are giving all people every possible opportunity to cast their vote.

I fully believe more people will register to vote if H.B. 5024 becomes law. But more importantly, I believe more people will vote if H.B. 5024 becomes law. I urge the committee to support H.B. 5024.

H.J. No. 2:

This may be the single most important proposal the legislature will have to vote on this year. And I even have my own bill out there to work!

I hate to give any credit to the State of Indiana right now after what the state legislature has done to the working middle class in their state. However, I must commend Indiana for their absentee voting.

Indiana has early voting. And working on numerous campaigns both there and here I can tell you it makes all the difference. Having to prove that you won't be in your voting district the day of the election is unduly burdensome.

Additionally, the fact that the only time a person can vote is between 6am-8pm on one day in the whole year is an additional burden that I personally find completely ridiculous.

Like I've state above, voting is an inalienable right given to every citizen of this country. We must do everything we can to make voting as easy and accessible as possible. Look, in these times it's not so easy for an impoverished taxpayer working 3 minimum wage jobs to feed their

family to leave work in the middle of the day to stand in line at a polling location. It's not easy for a college student who may have classes all day and doesn't know their way around the district to get a ride in between classes to their polling location. It's not easy for an elderly voter who has limited mobility due to the use of an oxygen tank to get a healthcare worker to fill up their portable oxygen so they can wait in line at their polling location. And these people aren't even eligible to vote by absentee. They're all in the district on Election Day.

But, if there was no excuse absentee voting and if we had early voting in Connecticut, these issues are immediately resolved.

People can go cast their vote on a Saturday morning, on a Thursday evening or they can stay home with their oxygen tank or attend all of their classes without worrying about missing their chance to cast their vote for the person they want representing them.

I very much hope this committee supports H.J. No. 2.

The people and organizations who will be opposing these proposals are most definitely those who commit the most egregious voter crimes; voter fraud, voter intimidation and voter suppression. I hope their desperate lies and hateful rhetoric are ignored and tossed aside as incredible and unfounded.

I hope this committee stands up for every American. I hope this committee does the right thing and votes yes on H.B. 5024, H.B. 5022 and H.J. No. 2. You have the chance to change Connecticut for the better. What an honor it must be to be sitting on this committee in this historic moment for our great state!

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Glassman