

Testimony before Government Administration and Elections Committee

March 2, 2012

Submitted by Tom Swan

Executive Director of the CT. Citizen Action Group

Good Afternoon Representative Morin , Senator Slossberg and other members of the GAE Committee my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG). I want to commend you for having a hearing today on:

- HB 5022 An Act Increasing Penalties for Voter Intimidation and Interference
- HB 5024 An Act Concerning Voting Rights
- House Joint Resolution 2: Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting

These bills combined with our Citizens Election Program and several other items have the potential to make CT the beacon of democracy in our great country – a goal that a state called the Constitution State should strive for.

HB 5022 is something that is particularly important these days. Clearly the penalties in current law are inadequate if we are to protect the right to vote. We are particularly proud of how this bill stands in stark contrast to clearly racist efforts in other states suppress voter participation and you should be too.

HB 5024 will expand voter participation and remove barriers to voting. The improvements in the on-line voter file eliminate many of the earlier arguments against Election Day Registration and the on-line registration makes sense if we are trying to create a citizen friendly government in Connecticut.

Finally, I want to endorse HJ Resolution2. I am happy to see there appears to be broad agreement that establishing criteria for determining eligibility for an absentee ballot should not be in the constitution, but should be up to the legislature. In today's fast paced times we need an electoral system that meets the needs of voters and maximizes the opportunity for participation.

Thank you for your time and for putting forward these pieces of legislation.