

My name is Luther Weeks, CTVotersCount, Glastonbury, CT.

We oppose expanded mail-in voting in any form, including no-excuse absentee voting. As I testified last year, we have no objection to a Constitutional Amendment authorizing the General Assembly to legislate early voting, provided, that voters are clearly informed of the amendment's intent.

The primary reason to avoid expanded mail-in or no-excuse absentee voting is the opportunity for and documented record of absentee voting fraud. There are other reasons:

- Contrary to a touted benefit – it DECREASES election turnout – A recent academic report showed that early voting, including mail-in voting, decreases turnout by 3%, while an earlier report showed a reduction of 2.6% to 2.9%.
- It disenfranchises voters, not providing the opportunity to revote when they mistakenly overvote.
- It disenfranchises voters, when applications or ballots are lost or delayed in the mail.

This year the Secretary of the State organized an Elections Performance Task Force. She invited Doug Chapin, Director of the Program for Excellence in Election Administration, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, to address the task force. He said:

It is like trying to drive a screw with a hammer...Implementing vote by mail, vote centers, or the like, thinking it will have some sort of impact on turn-out is misguided, it might, but likely will not... You can have little to no impact on your turn-out bottom line with election laws. Turnout tends to be driven by what's on the ballot rather than when, where, and how it is available.

The current text of the amendment seems convoluted and with potential problems. It also does not clearly state what voters will be authorizing the General Assembly to do.

- It seems to authorize early voting based on subsequently not going to the polls
- It seems to preclude anyone from appearing at any polling place who has voted earlier, such as a pollworker, police officer, or representatives of the Secretary of the State and State Elections Enforcement Commissions.
- It might preclude election day vote centers.

Instead of the current amendment text:

The general assembly may provide by law for voting in the choice of any officer to be elected or upon any question to be voted on at an election by qualified voters of the state who [] do not appear in person at a polling place on the day of an election.

I suggest an example of clearer, unambiguous text:

The general assembly may provide by law for alternate voting methods, including no-excuse absentee voting, and early voting in the choice of any officer to be elected or upon any question to be voted on at an election by qualified voters of the state who [] would prefer not to vote in-person at their normal polling place on the day of an election.

Finally, the public needs to be clearly informed in the Question text on the ballot, that the intention of the amendment, as the intention of original version of the bill (LCO 100) includes “no-excuse absentee voting”. Then we would have the best of both worlds, the public knowingly deciding for or against no-excuse absentee voting and the legislature authorized to exercise their judgment, to fix or reverse legislation quickly, when problems occur.

In summary, no-excuse absentee voting is all about convenience, while adding municipal expense, less confidence in elections, and ironically, lower turnout.

Thank you.

Testimony March 11, 2011

As I testified on February 14th (2011) we have no objection to a Constitutional amendment authorizing the General Assembly to legislate early voting. This amendment would mandate no-excuse absentee voting, with no safeguards, making repeal difficult, and precluding early voting in any other form.

The primary reason to avoid expanded mail-in or no-excuse absentee voting is the opportunity for and documented record of fraud – it seems that after every national election we find stories of fraud, prosecution, and conviction based on mail-in voting. We provide links to recent reports in OH, FL, AZ, CA, and TX.

OH: <http://ctvoterscount.org/absentee-ballot-fraud-in-ohio/>

FL: <http://ctvoterscount.org/no-excuse-absentee-voting-unintended-consequences/>

AZ, CA, FL: <http://ctvoterscount.org/absenteeearly-voting-raise-questions-and-risks/>

TX: <http://ctvoterscount.org/how-not-to-increase-voter-participation/>

Not so long ago candidates and party workers in large cities in Connecticut were convicted and penalized for absentee ballot fraud.

I agree with MIT Professor and security expert Ron Rivest who recommends that:

“Unsupervised remote voting [including absentee voting is] vulnerable to vote-selling, bribery, and coercion. Communication with voter[s], and transmission of ballots, may be unreliable/manipulable”. Rivest concludes that: *“Remote voting should be allowed only as needed, for at most 5% of voters”.*

<http://www.ctvoterscount.org/ron-rivest-militaryoverseas-internet-voting-risks-and-rewards/>

There is another reason to oppose early voting including no-excuse absentee voting – it does not accomplish its intended purpose – it DECREASES election turnout - A recent academic report showed that early voting, including mail-in voting, decreases turnout by 3%, while an earlier report showed a reduction of 2.6% to 2.9%.

The recent report is a PEW supported University of Wisconsin study. The earlier report from, 2007, is by researchers at the University of San Diego and Temple University.

We provide links to both reports and the text of a New York Times Op-Ed by the authors of the recent report.

<http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewcenteronthestatesorg/Initiatives/MVW/UWisconsin.pdf>

<http://weber.ucsd.edu/~tkousser/votbymail.htm>

And an article covering concerns with mail-in voting:

<http://californiawatch.org/dailyreport/cheaper-popular-mail-ballots-worry-critics-7479>

The Opinion Pages

Voting Early, but Not So Often

By BARRY C. BURDEN and KENNETH R. MAYER

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ELECTION Day is nearly upon us, but for many voters it has already come and gone. States have aggressively expanded the use of early voting, allowing people to submit their ballots before Election Day in person, by mail and in voting centers set up in shopping malls and other public places. More than 30 percent of votes cast in the 2008 presidential race arrived before Election Day itself, double the amount in 2000. In 10 states, more than half of all votes were cast early, with some coming in more than a month before the election. Election Day as we know it is quickly becoming an endangered species.

Early voting offers convenience and additional opportunities to cast a ballot. Common sense tells us that this should mean higher turnout. But a thorough look at the data shows that the opposite is true: early voting depresses turnout by several percentage points.

Our research, conducted with our colleagues David Canon and Donald Moynihan at the University of Wisconsin, is based on a three-part statistical analysis of the 2008 presidential election. First, we analyzed voting patterns in each of the nation's 3,100 counties to estimate the effect of early voting laws on turnout. We controlled for a wide range of demographic, geographic and political variables, like whether a county was in a battleground state.

Controlling for all of the other factors thought to shape voter participation, our model showed that the availability of early voting reduced turnout in the typical county by three percentage points. Consider, as an example, a county in Kentucky, which lacks early voting. If we compared this to a similar county in neighboring Tennessee, which permits early voting, we would observe, other things being equal, turnout that was 3 points lower.

Next, we studied the data on more than 70,000 voters and nonvoters from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, which asks respondents whether they voted. Once again, we employed a statistical model to control for demographic variables like education and race as well as geographic and political factors. The model showed that an individual living in a state with early voting had a probability of voting that was four points lower than a comparable voter in a state without early voting.

Third, we took advantage of a useful feature of the census survey, which asks individuals whether they voted early or on Election Day. We examined the characteristics of voters and nonvoters, and found that the profiles of early voters and election day voters were mostly similar.

With one big exception: our model forecast that early voters had profiles that made them two percentage points more likely to vote than Election Day voters, whether there was an early option or not. Early voters were more educated and older and had higher incomes, all traits associated with a higher probability of voting. A probability difference of 2 percentage points may seem like a trivial figure, but when applied to populations of millions, it can shift national and state elections.

Even with all of the added convenience and easier opportunities to cast ballots, turnout not only doesn't increase with early voting, it actually falls. How can this be? The answer lies in the nature of voter registration laws, and the impact of early voting on mobilization efforts conducted by parties and other groups on Election Day.

In most states, registration and voting take place in two separate steps. A voter must first register, sometimes a month before the election, and then return another time to cast a ballot. Early voting by itself does not eliminate this two-step requirement. For voters who missed their registration deadline, the convenience of early voting is irrelevant.

Early voting also dilutes the intensity of Election Day. When a large share of votes is cast well in advance of the first Tuesday in November, campaigns begin to scale back their late efforts. The parties run fewer ads and shift workers to more competitive states. Get-out-the-vote efforts in particular become much less efficient when so many people have already voted.

When Election Day is merely the end of a long voting period, it lacks the sort of civic stimulation that used to be provided by local news media coverage and discussion around the water cooler. Fewer co-workers will be sporting "I voted" stickers on their lapels on Election Day. Studies have shown that these informal interactions have a strong effect on turnout, as they generate social pressure. With significant early voting, Election Day can become a kind of afterthought, simply the last day of a drawn-out slog.

Fortunately, there is a way to improve turnout and keep the convenience of early voting. Our research shows that when early voting is combined with same-day registration — that is, you can register to vote and cast an early ballot on the same day — the depressive effect of early voting disappears. North Carolina and Vermont, two otherwise very different states that combined early voting with same-day registration, had turnout levels in 2008 that were much higher than the overall national figure of 58 percent of the voting-age population. Turnouts in Vermont and North Carolina were, respectively, 63 percent and 64 percent. Allowing Election-Day registration, in which voters can register at the polling place, has the same effect. Our models show that the simple presence of Election-Day registration in states like Minnesota and New Hampshire increases turnout by more than six points.

By removing barriers that require potential voters to register weeks before a campaign reaches its height, less-engaged citizens can enter the voting process late — and political campaigns can respond by maintaining the intensity of their efforts through Election Day.

The implications for policymakers are obvious. Adopting a form of "one-stop shopping" facilitates a larger and more representative set of voters. Early voting may be the most popular reform sweeping across the states, but it alone is not the key to raising voter turnout.

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