



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee

January 28, 2013 Public Hearing

Comments provided by: Susan Voris, Election Laws Specialist, League of Women Voters of Connecticut

My name is Susan Voris. I am the Election Laws Specialist for the League of Women Voters of Connecticut a state-wide organization with over 1800 members. The League is dedicated to improving the electoral process.

Support for: HJ 16 – Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Grant Increased Authority to the General Assembly Regarding Election Administration.

The League supports measures which assure that absentee ballot privileges are available to all electors- for any reason. The Connecticut Constitution and current law limit the use of an absentee ballot to a handful of specific electors including those who will be out of town during the election, the sick and disabled, those whose religious tenets prohibit them from going to the polling place and election workers who may be working at a polling place other than their own. It penalizes other electors who are precluded from applying for an absentee ballot, but may in fact benefit most from using these ballots, such as first responders, commuters, family caregivers or the parents of young children. While these voters may have the intent to make it to the polls, their situations can be unpredictable; under current absentee ballot rules, their right to vote may be denied to them. The law's intent should be to increase voter participation, not disenfranchise our electors by putting up obstacles to voting. A first responder, who works in the same community where he lives, may be on duty and unable to make it to the polls. A commuter by the letter of the law must be outside the town limits before 6 a.m. and not return until after 8 p.m. in order to qualify for an absentee ballot. A caregiver for a sick or disabled family member who qualifies for an absentee ballot cannot seek his or her own absentee ballot and must find a substitute caregiver or give up his/her right to vote in an election.

Passage of HJ 16 would remove the restrictions on absentee ballots from the Connecticut Constitution and allow the legislature to determine the rules for absentee voting including extending absentee ballot privileges to all electors. The General Assembly should recognize that absentee ballots have been used in Connecticut for many years and the process is well established. The League urges the Committee to support HJ 16 and encourages continued strong measures and strict penalties to ensure there is no undue influence or voter fraud in the use of these ballots.