

**Government Administration and Elections Committee
HOUSE FAVORABLE REPORT**

Bill No.: SJ-31

RESOLUTION PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO

Title: ALLOW EARLY VOTING.

Vote Date: 3/23/18

Vote Action: House Favorable

PH Date: 3/15/2018

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee
Rep. James M. Albis, 99th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill proposes a constitutional amendment that would be placed on the 2018 general election ballot. The ballot measure would give voters more flexibility when exercising their right to vote, by allowing an early voting period. It would also reduce congestion on Election Day.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Denise W. Merrill, Secretary of State:

Secretary of State Merrill testified in support of HJ-28 to help people exercise their most fundamental right. More than one-third of voters voted early in the 2016 election. It would reduce the lines on Election Day and the majority of other states have early voting, which gives voters more flexibility.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Mark H. Bernacki, Legislative Committee Chair, Connecticut Town Clerks Association (CTCA):

CTCA testified in support of HJ-28. Allowing early voting by tabulator will ensure that more ballots will be cast and counted in an environment where ballot rejection is nearly impossible.

Absentee ballots account for approximately 7% of votes in an election, with 3-5% of ballots being rejected and delayed mail delivery. The current “paper” system is costly and lacks proper identification checks.

Cheri Quickmire, Executive Director, Common Cause in Connecticut:

Common Cause testified in support of HJ-28. Based on research, the benefits of early voting includes reduced stress on the voting system on Election Day, shorter lines on Election Day, improved poll worker performance, early identification and correction of registration errors and voting system glitches, and greater access to voting and increased voter satisfaction.

Common Cause made recommendations for the bill: begin early in person voting a full two weeks before Election Day; provide weekend voting, including the weekend before Election Day; set minimum daily hours for early voting and provide extended hours outside standard business hours; allow use of both private and public facilities; distribute early voting places fairly and equitably; update poll books daily; and educate the electorate about early voting.

Kaley Lentini, Legislative Counsel, ACLU Connecticut:

ACLU-CT testified in support of HJ-28 to help ensure equal access to the ballot box. It will decrease congestion at the polls on Election Day and improve the chances of members of the vulnerable population, such as the elderly and disabled, getting to the polls. 39 states and the District of Columbia have some form of early voting.

Susan Lloyd Yolen, Vice President, Public Policy & Advocacy for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England:

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testified in support of HJ-28. If passed, this bill would ensure there are sufficient voting days, hours, and locations for all eligible citizens to cast their ballots without undue delay or obstacles. Early voting also allows election administrators to improve election performance by more effectively managing daily voter flow, poll worker training and staffing, and the resolution of potential registration problems before Election Day.

Yvonne Senturia, Election Law Specialist, League of Women Voters of Connecticut, Inc.:

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut strongly supports HJ-28. The League believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote and therefore encourage efforts to maximize voter participation and early voting.

Tom Swan, Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG):

The CCAG testified in support of HJ-28. Many people do not have a fixed work schedule or have a commute and cannot guarantee they will make it to the polls before they close. Connecticut is one of only 13 states without early voting. Should that be changed, voter participation will increase and congestion at the polls will decrease.

Walter Dodson, Vice Chair & Emily O'Hara, New Voter Project Coordinator, Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG):

ConnPIRG supports the bill stating that restrictions on transportation and time complicate the voting process for college students. Furthermore, college students are still forming voting habits and encouraging them to vote by expanding access will help create engaged citizens.

Juan Hernandez, District Director, 32BJ Service Employees International Union (SEIU):

SEIU submitted testimony in support of the bill stating its importance in expanding access to the democratic process especially since many of its members work unconventional hours and find it difficult to get to the polls.

Tom Swan, Executive Director, Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG):

CCAG supports the bill citing its importance to the democratic process and the right to vote.

Matthew Waggner, Registrar, Town of Fairfield:

Mr. Waggner submitted testimony in support of the bill noting that under the current system, legitimate voters are disenfranchised when expecting the ability to vote early then coming to understand they are not able to.

Luther Weeks, Executive Director, CTVotersCount:

CTVotersCount supports the bill with suggested amendment. They suggest that the compromise method of in-person absentee voting be used.

Carole Young-Kleinfeld, Registrar of Voters, Town of Wilton:

Ms. Young-Kleinfeld supports the bill. They state that one of the most frequent questions asked leading up to an election is when and where early voting is offered.

QUEST, A Program of Leadership Greater Hartford:

Bria Day, Quest:

Elizabeth Eberhardt, Quest:

Maria McKinley, Quest:

Ryan Keating, Quest:

Larisa Kottke, Quest:

Kimberly Parsons-Whitaker, Quest:

Amanda Trothier, Quest:

Meg Taylor, Quest:

Keith Bernier, Quest:

Samantha VanSchoick, Quest:

Quest testified in support of HJ-28. It is convenient, will increase voter turn-out on and before Election Day, reduce bias to the wealthy and privileged, and save time from waiting in line.

The Committee received over 40 pieces of additional, similar testimony in support of the bill, stating its impact on convenience, flexibility, and the desire to align CT with much of the rest of the country.

**Bossers, George W
Boye-Williams, Patrici
Bradley, Joseph W.,Rev.
Butlin, William
Byer, Marion
Casserino, Casey Beth
Coltz, Jessika J
Durocher, Kristi
Ewing, Amy
Foss, Elizabeth Anne
Fritsch Jr., Walter S
Gallo, John
Gryk, D
Hanratty, Judith**

**Huttner, Sharon
Kaplan, Ira
Kaplan, Ronny
Kelley, Michael
Kleindienst, Jennifer
Kobasa, Stephen V
Kushner, Julie
LaPenta-Duffek, Terri
Looney, Martin
Lounsbury, Amanda
McCullough, Christina
Messina, Len, Professor,
Miller, Christopher R.
Miller, Susan C**

**Nichols, William
Perloe, Jonathan
Quesada, Elizabeth
Reeseman, Jim
Robertson, Mary M
Roy, Nicole
Siegel-Miles, Alyssa
Sullivan, Garret
Truglio-Kirwin, Marilyn
Tyler, Corinne
Vavasour, Robert
Waldron, Mary
Ware, David K.
Zelinsky, V**

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Stevie Hoyt

Date: 4/10/18