



BRIDGEPORT GENERATION NOW!

**CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 13, 2019 Public Hearing
Written Testimony Submitted by: Bridgeport Generation Now**

**Support for:
SB1036 AAC Regionalism for Elections
SB1046 AAC Election Day Registration in Polling Places
SB1049 AAC Modern Elections
SB1050 AAC Ranked-Choice Voting for Elections
HB6059 AAC Organizational Changes to Election Day Registration
HJ161 Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early
Voting and No-Excuse Absentee Voting**

About Bridgeport Generation Now:

We are a nonpartisan, grassroots social action network that empowers and unites our communities by increasing civic engagement. We encourage residents and our youth to take an active role in strengthening Bridgeport. We are open to all residents of Bridgeport, and anyone can be a member if they get involved in the community and show that they care about the future of our city.

We focus on policy research, civic and political education, and community organizing. Our collective work lives at the intersection of community building, systems change, and self-determination. Our current organizing frames are democratic empowerment, good governance, justice, equity, and livability. Our vision is to collectively develop into local leaders who practice intersectionality, collective action, openness, ethics, and love.

Our view on Democratic Empowerment is as follows:

At Bridgeport Generation Now, we believe that Democratic Empowerment is about all people having strong decision-making power and influence over our city.

We envision a city in which people's capacity for participating in their own community is constantly being evaluated and improved.

We envision a city where all people understand the electoral process and how to be civically engaged.

We envision a city where all civic information is easy to find and transparent.

We envision a city where our institutions – our schools, police, our elected officials – are in service to the people, not the other way around.

We envision a city where the people have the power to lift the barriers to their agency, well-being, and freedom.

We envision a city where the people control and improve their community, both individually and collectively.

We envision a city where – in spite of opposition – the people have the power to make change.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of these bills.

HJ161 Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting and No-Excuse Absentee Voting:

In Bridgeport, CT there is a history of abuse regarding Absentee Ballots. To the point where on 6/21/17 Bridgeport City Council Members openly discussed Bridgeport's problems with Absentee Ballot fraud and agreed there needs to be better supervision and education.

Bridgeport Generation Now has created the following policy recommendations for Political Campaigns, Registrar of Voters, and State Delegation:

- **We need better local educational efforts.** There are several locations in Bridgeport that receive a heavy concentration of absentee ballots. Citizens might not know the rules governing absentee ballots. Voting by Absentee Ballot might also be the only way they know how to vote. They also might be afraid of losing their housing if they vote the “wrong way.” This lack of information causes confusion that can be preyed upon. Educational efforts by the Registrar of Voters should be focused on the areas of high absentee ballot concentration, such as elderly and assisted living facilities, and public housing, and could be in the form of a website, posters on the rules of absentee ballots, lectures, and seminars.
- **We need outside observation and monitoring.** Given the history of hard evidence of absentee ballot issues in Bridgeport, we should call for outside parties to monitor the use of absentee ballots in our elections, such as:
 - ACLU
 - FBI
 - League of Women Voters or other fair election groups
 - State of CT SOTS or SEEC
- **We need rule changes at the state level.** Initiatives can level the playing field and take the power out of the hands of political operatives, with maximum enfranchisement including:
 - Allowing early voting. According to Vote.org, “Most states offer early voting at this point.”
 - Allowing “convenience” or “no excuse” absentee balloting.
 - As of January 2019, according to the National Conference of State Legislators there are 39 states (including 3 that mail ballots to all voters) and the District of Columbia that

allow early voting. Any qualified voter may cast a ballot in person during a designated period prior to Election Day. No excuse or justification is required.

Bridgeport Generation Now supports HJ161 that would amend the state constitution, to vest the General Assembly with the authority to loosen the standards for obtaining an absentee ballot and the authority to create an early voting system.