

Connecticut

Testimony to the GAE Committee in Support of House Joint Resolution 161:
RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW FOR
EARLY VOTING AND NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

3/13/19

By Nora Duncan, State Director

For nearly 40 years, the turnout of voters over age 45 has significantly outpaced younger Americans. While the 2018 data is still being parsed, we know that in the 2016 Presidential Election 71% of Americans age 65 voted, compared with 46% of 18-29 year olds. Even the high percentage of 71% is too low and we must also focus on increasing the vote among our younger citizens.

A 2015 study by the Cal Tech/MIT Voting Technology Project estimated that long lines deterred at least 730,000 Americans from voting in 2012.

Some of us might say “how could a line keep you from you voting?” When faced with a long line during a short period between getting the kids off to school and getting to your shift at work we can start to imagine how a line might deter someone. And maybe after your shift at work you have a class because you are pursuing a degree part-time. Or maybe you must go to take care of an aging loved one who is counting on you for meal preparation or medication administration. When we think about the complexities of some people’s lives, it becomes easier to imaging how a long line might deter someone from voting and even imagine how having just one day to vote might make voting impossible for some people.

Our lives are a lot different now than they were 50 or 60 years ago, but not much has changed about casting a vote on Election Day.

CT saw record-breaking ballots cast in November, but that should not distract us from increasing critical civic participation. The long lines and we saw in CT in November elections were both **encouraging** in that lots of people want to vote, and **discouraging** in that there has got to be a way to make the process faster and easier.

AARP supports improving voter access and maximizing participation. Our policy includes support for:

- Adopting a minimum early voting standard of at least 15 days of no less than four uniform hours each day in publicly accessible sites;
- Setting standards for the number of voting machines and elections workers to help avoid long voter lines; and
- Accepting voter pre-registration of 16 & 17 year olds.

How many more elections are we willing to let pass before Connecticut joins the 39 other states that allow early and/or mail in voting? Connecticut needs to allow voters a chance to decide what the future of voting looks like in the Constitution State on November 3, 2020.

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 38 million nationwide, and nearly 600,000 members here in Connecticut. We fight for issues that matter most to older adults and their families such as healthcare, family caregiving, and retirement security, and civic engagement.