



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

2139 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 205
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
(860) 257-8066

Michelle Kenefick, LCSW, SEP, President
Stephen Wanczyk- Karp, LMSW, Executive Director
naswct@naswct.net

Testimony on Resolution Proposing An Amendment To The State Constitution To Allow
For Early Voting And No-Excuse Absentee Voting
Government Administration and Elections

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Submitted By: Stephen Wanczyk-Karp, LMSW

The National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter, representing over 2500 members supports HJR 161 to begin the steps toward amending the State Constitution to allow for early voting.

Connecticut's constitution and statutes are restrictive in terms of when elections can be held and the rules around them. Unlike 38 other states and the District of Columbia we are currently unable to take advantage of early voting that offers voters ample opportunities to participate in an election. Likewise, no excuse absentee voting will offer expansion of opportunities for registered voters to exercise their right to vote. Voters schedules, illness on election day, work responsibilities and family engagements, can become a barrier to making it to the polling place on Election Day. Instead of making voting maximally convenient, Connecticut's one day only to vote makes it unnecessarily inconvenient to vote. This disenfranchises a portion of voters who for various reasons are not able to vote on Election Day.

HJR 161 calls for no-excuse absentee balloting and voting in-person for a minimum of three days prior to an election. Early voting will have the following positive outcomes:

- Having at least three days of advance voting that includes the weekend before Election Day will give far greater number of voter's ample time to get to the polls.
- Polling places will have shorter lines on Election Day.
- Parents of pre-voter age children will have greater opportunity to take their children with them to vote, modeling and instilling the importance of voting.
- Individuals who may have difficulty getting to the polls due to health or transportation issues will have greater opportunity to arrange to vote.
- Individuals who commute out-of-state will have greater opportunity to get to vote.
- Increasing access to voting will strengthen voting turnout and encourage greater participation in our democratic processes.

This Resolution is only the first step toward making voting a greater priority through early voting and no excuse absentee voting. A vote in favor of this Resolution moves the process forward, ultimately to letting the voters (who can vote on Election Day) choose if early voting is desired. The Resolution does not dictate costs, voting locations or other decisions that the Legislature will have to make and will have time to determine if a referendum is approved.

Voting is a right and should be made as flexible as feasible to assure maximum participation in the State's electoral process. NASW/CT urges passage of HJR 161.