

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-491 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE'S
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NO-EXCUSE

Title: ABSENTEE VOTING.

Vote Date: 3/23/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/18/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To expand absentee voting, implement the 2024 no-excuse absentee ballot referendum, expand voter participation, and make the absentee ballot process more efficient.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Removes provisions restricting who may distribute absentee ballot applications; amends restrictions on committees distributing them; amends curing procedures to allow for early notification; removes provisions adjusting when permanent absentee ballot verifications must occur and implements alternate procedures; and modifies requirements for the secretary of the state's statewide mailing on absentee balloting changes.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State

The Secretary of State supports this bill, but implementation will require thoughtful modernization of the administrative systems involved, but several provisions will address key operational issues. It allows for a curing process to allow good faith voters that make a mistake the opportunity to fix issues, so their ballot is not rejected. Further, it creates a comprehensive vote tracking system, modernizes absentee ballot processing procedures, simplifies the envelope system by moving it to a single envelope, removes non-governmental circulators, and integrates it with early voting. These provisions create a responsible framework for implementing expanded absentee voting. However, these administrative

improvements need to be in place before a full implementation with year 1 including ballot curing, conversion to one envelope, ballot tracking, and year 2 including the removal of non-governmental circulators, and the establishment of a permanent absentee ballot list.

Ryan Burns, Executive Director and General Council, SEEC

The State Elections Enforcement Commission takes no position. SEEC does believe, however, that the expanded use of absentee ballots will increase the strain on our investigatory resources. SEEC is also concerned that the removal of section 4 of this bill will make it harder to discover and prosecute those that attempt to manipulate or improperly influence absentee ballots.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity:

Werner Oyanadel, Latino and Puerto Rican Policy Director

Megan Baker, Lead Asian American Pacific Islander Policy Analyst for CWCSEO

The CWCSEO supports this bill. They cite that in November 2024, 58% of voters voted in favor of no-excuse absentee ballot voting, and that expanding absentee voting provides greater flexibility in how individuals can participate in elections while maintaining existing safeguards designed to protect election integrity. This is another proposal that will work in tandem with Connecticut's efforts to modernize voting. It will catch Connecticut up with national practices as twenty-seven other states allow for no-excuse absentee voting. This bill can also address equity concerns. Working-class voters, elderly residents, voters with disabilities, and communities of color face disproportionate difficulty in getting to the polls in person during the limited hours on Election Day.

Ann Reed, Vice-President and Co-Head for Advocacy, League of Women Voters of Connecticut

The LWV CT supports expanding access to the ballot in all ways that create efficient and supportive processes for eligible voters. The bill implements the will of the people of Connecticut who overwhelmingly voted in support of it in 2024. While the bill does not implement all the changes the LWV CT would like to see, the changes it does provide are long overdue.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU

This legislation will implement the mandate set by the voters of Connecticut in 2024. Connecticut's previous limited voting options have historically harmed black voters and voters of color. In many recent elections, long lines have affected the same cities and precincts repeatedly, typically areas with greater concentrations of voters of color. These limited systems also effect people with little job flexibility, lack of transportations, lack of childcare, incarcerated pre-trial for misdemeanors, disabilities, and voters with language barriers. While the legislature has a long way to go to make voting accessible to everyone, this bill with the recommended amendments is crucial to expanding equitable access to voters.

Antoinette Spinelli, Waterbury Town Clerk and Co-Chair of the Legislative and Elections Committee, Connecticut Town Clerks Association

Peter Smith, Milford Town Clerk, Co-Chair of the Legislative and Elections Committee, Connecticut Town Clerks Association

They support the transition to the single-envelope absentee ballot system as one of the main reasons absentee ballots are rejected under the two-envelope system is user error, thus simplifying the process would help ensure more ballots submitted by voters are successfully counted. They also support the ballot cure process in this bill, allowing the Town Clerk to contact voters to fix issues before the ballot is rejected. The inclusion of unique ballot identification numbers, expanded record-keeping requirements, and reporting on the methods by which absentee ballots are returned can increase efficiency and allow for easier ballot tracking.

John Erlingheuser, Senior Advocacy and Outreach Director, AARP

The right to vote is among the most basic rights in our constitution, however recent elections have revealed many flaws and practices that make voting more difficult. AARP believes that policies should be enacted to encourage maximum participation in the electoral process.

Samuel Gold, Executive Director, River COG

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments is in strong support of this bill. Absentee ballots can be requested and filled out at the leisure of the voter with little additional cost to municipalities. No-excuse absentee voting could possibly allow the state to remove early voting days, possibly replacing in-person early voting entirely with a paper ballot system.

Neal Ubriani, Chief of Policy, Responsive Gov Action

The bill simplifies several administrative processes, including some that can reduce voter error and streamlining the processing for election officials. The ballot tracking system will help build voter confidence while reducing administrative inquiries to election officials. The notice-and-cure process allowing voters to correct certain errors will reduce ballot rejection rates, and the earlier processing of absentee ballots will allow election officials manage higher volumes of mail ballots producing faster results.

Wendy Darasz, Resident

The right to vote is one of the most sacred aspects and civic rights of being a United States citizen, thus policies should be enacted that encourage participation in our elections. No-excuse absentee voting by mail is one of the most efficient ways to ensure every registered voter can participate. This bill would also expand access for voters that are elderly, ill, have mobility issues, or limited access to transportation.

The following individuals expressed broad support for the bill citing accessibility and ease of use.

- Felicia DeDominicis
- Marian Hanson

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Dr. Linda Dalessio, Co-Chair, Connecticut for Unite 4 Freedom

Ms. Dalessio writes in opposition citing that the current voter rolls are corrupted and inaccurate with double voters, dead voters, and voters that simply do not exist. Their audit group, in collaboration with Unite 4 Freedom, filed a former complaint with SEEC regarding Help America Vote Act violations for voting years 2022 and 2024. The audit data was submitted to numerous agency offices to response, except for Republican leadership. In the

2022 and 2024 elections we found hundreds of thousands of excess voters, including with errors and omissions from the voter database. Due to absentee ballots not having a chain of custody, signature verification, and only include a statement that the "voter" is stating under penalty of false statement that they are eligible to vote, this bill, if enacted, will further advance the fraud present in Connecticut's voting.

John Chunis, Rocky Hill Resident

Mr. Chunis opposes the bill citing that no-excuse absentee voting can lead to certain individuals casting votes in the names of others living at an address. He cites that there are numerous polling places for anyone that wants to cast a vote and that there are exemptions for those that can't make it due to an illness, disability, or working out of state.

Reported by: Samuel Erickson

Date: 3/31/26