

RE: LCO 3576 Absentee Ballots

July 21, 2020

Chairwoman Flexer, Chairman Fox, Vice Chair Haskell, Vice Chair Winkler, Ranking Member Sampson and Ranking Member France:

For your consideration, below please find a letter to Governor Lamont from the Chairs of the Democratic Town Committees of Senate District 35 in support of expanded access to absentee ballots.

The Honorable Ned Lamont
201 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 061016

Dear Governor Lamont,

The chairs of the thirteen Democratic Town Committees of the 35th Senatorial District endorse eliminating the restrictions on use of absentee ballots for the November election. We applaud you for taking action with Executive Order 7QQ to allow COVID-19 to be a reason to avoid in-person voting in the August primary.

We are all concerned with in-person voting during this pandemic and want to avoid asking voters to choose between their health and their civic duty to vote in November. We support continued exploration with Secretary of State Denise Merrill on passing legislative solutions to allow CT citizens to vote remotely and safely in November.

There are several ways to make this happen this year.

The Connecticut Constitution (Article Sixth, Section Seven) restricts absentee ballots to certain groups of people who can't make it to the polls, "because of sickness."

CT statutes (9-135) are actually more restrictive, and the corresponding statutory language is due to "his or her illness."

The legislature could permanently remove the "his or her" language from the statute, conforming the language to the language in the constitution. This would also give Denise Merrill the flexibility to interpret due to "illness" as encompassing our current global pandemic.

The Connecticut League of Conservation Voters polling shows bipartisan support for keeping polling places open while giving voters the option for using absentee ballots.

We urge you to follow all options to make our general elections safe for the voters and poll workers. By allowing expanded absentee ballots you can ensure voters are not disenfranchised due to fear or organizational snags.

We thank you for your hard work and leadership during this crisis.

Sincerely,

William Dauphin, CT Democratic State Central Committeeman for the 35th Senate District
Lisa Thomas, CT Democratic State Central Committeewoman for the 35th Senate District

Cc: Lt. Governor, Susan Bysiewicz
Secretary of the State Denise Merrill,
Legislative leaders/