

July 21, 2020

Dear Members of the Government and Administrations Election Committee,

Connecticut has some of the most restrictive voting laws in the country. How embarrassing to be on a par with states who regularly practice voter suppression. We can and should be better than that and it is my hope that in the next legislative session you will adopt meaningful voting rights that include early voting, expanded absentee balloting and write in balloting. Connecticut should be facilitating the exercise of a fundamental democratic right, not impeding it.

Today, because Connecticut has failed to lead in the area of voting rights, we are at a supreme disadvantage and our voters are suffering. We face the prospect of choosing between staying home and staying safe this November and exercising our right to vote -- because today we are in the middle of a pandemic where in-person voting risks exposure to Covid-19. For many that risk is unacceptable. In addition to having heightened risk factors ourselves, many of us also live with people we don't want to expose to the virus. Moreover, in addition to killing people, this virus appears to inflict neurological, lung and other complications on certain of its victims and little is known about long term side effects. It is nonsensical to consider requiring people to go to the polls under these circumstances.

In order to vote safely, every voter needs to be able to vote by absentee ballot during the pandemic -- the entire pandemic. Additionally, please make sure that the Secretary of State is able to mail absentee ballots to all registered voters in the fall along with a stamped return envelope. Given the recent changes made by the new postmaster general in hopes of disenfranchising voters, please include a clause which stipulates that absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots get prioritized by the CT USPS.

Finally, there is no such thing as widespread voter fraud and Connecticut has many precautions in place to prevent it. To the extent there have been complaints about irregularities in Bridgeport, you can and should provide for an election monitor. I understand the one in Hartford proved very effective.

To conclude, no one should have to choose between protecting one's health and exercising her right to vote. As elected representatives, it is my hope that each of you will be working tirelessly to ensure that voting is made safer and less burdensome always and certainly during a pandemic. Please support LCO #7536, the recommendations regarding the transmission of ballots set forth above, as well as an election monitor in Bridgeport.

Thank you,
Joanna Swomley
Greenwich, CT