

Comment on Proposed Weakening of Absentee Ballot Procedures

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I strongly oppose legislation or executive orders that would weaken the existing Connecticut State Constitution requirements for absentee voting. My convictions are as follows:

1. Allowing absentee voting only because of the fear of catching a disease is clearly unconstitutional. The Connecticut Constitution's exemption for "disease" is not for somebody else's disease, only for the disease of the voter. The governor's treacherous twisting of language to claim an exemption for the primaries is both logically incoherent and morally insufficient to ignore the Constitution.
2. Even if one does not agree with the unconstitutionality argument, the mere fact that there is a plausible unresolved constitutional question means that an election with weakened criteria would be under a constitutional cloud and may create extreme uncertainty and extended litigation and investigations at a time we need certainty. Do you really want a court in the District of Columbia to decide which Connecticut votes can be counted?
3. As a practical matter, allowing absentee voting without the strict constitutional controls increases the likelihood of fraud and corruption of the democratic process. As a nation we managed to conduct voting during the Civil War, two World Wars, multiple smaller conflicts, and countless other epidemics of frightening diseases without corrupting the necessary controls to avoid fraud.
4. Despite the head-in-sand opinions to the contrary, there is fraud in elections and there are hundreds of documented and convicted cases in recent history. A majority involve absentee ballots. We don't know how many undetected cases there are, but we can't afford to open still more doors for corruption. In the last two years alone, one Congressional election was invalidated in North Carolina owing to fraudulent absentee ballots, and even here in Bridgeport another election is under continuing dispute owing to *prima facie* evidence of absentee fraud.
5. If the constitutional and fraud-risk arguments are not convincing and you feel compelled to weaken the standards, at least minimize the harm by requiring that the absentee voter personally request in person or by mail the absentee ballot and stringently enforce the requirements that the voter pay all postage and that the ballot be received before closing of the polls – no exceptions.
6. There must be absolutely no solicitation mailings from government to apply for an absentee ballot. This overweening intervention by government has too many elements of the compulsive force of a superior power meddling in personal affairs. If dedicated citizens can get up and go to the polls without nanny prodding, that's the least we can expect of the rest.