

Honorable Members of the GAE Committee: This written testimony is in support of proposed legislation LCO 3576 AAC Absentee Ballot Voting.

I urge you and all state legislators to expand absentee ballot voting in the 2020 general election in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Changes to the CT statute underlying voting rules for use of absentee ballots (AB) should allow all eligible CT voters to vote lawfully with ABs *because of illness from the Coronavirus*.

Voters should not have to risk illness or even death in order to exercise their fundamental right to vote. I realize there are present Constitutional restrictions on use of ABs, but given the extraordinary circumstances the pandemic has created for every aspect of our lives, legislators must work together to find a way to lessen our danger in November.

I believe that helping citizens to vote is NOT a partisan issue, and should not be made one. But I fear it has become partisan at the state and federal level.

Already in Connecticut, Republicans have brought lawsuits against this AB expansion, and GOP legislators are mounting opposition to it based on arguments that altering existing statute is not lawful, and therefore doing so would break the law. In my opinion, this is a hollow and hypocritical “allegiance” to the “rule of law.” Republicans tacitly support by silence their acquiescence to a President who puts himself above it regularly. In an attempt to discredit the pending election, Trump hawks the dangers of AB use to discourage voting. Additionally, Republican legislatures for the last decade have all used the rule of law to disenfranchise millions of voters through gerrymandering, massive voter roll purges, extreme voter id laws and frivolous voting requirements, while shrinking voting days and polling places—*all to limit voters’ access*.

I feel strongly that when it comes to the franchise, Republicans today have lost any right to use a “defense of the rule of law” argument. They have demonstrated over and over again only a willingness to *use the law* (or hide behind it) to shrink and strangle voting rights, to suppress the franchise and to plunder our beleaguered democracy *just to keep people from voting*. This must stop.

Here in CT, Republicans have a chance to redeem themselves and to do the right thing – help us vote. All of us. If CT Republicans attempt to stop this health-based and life-saving expansion of AB use in CT for the general election, it will be for only one reason—to keep people from voting and voting safely. No one will be fooled by a Republican argument that they want to adhere to the law.

Please let us all vote safely: In November and going forward in future elections.

Thankyou.

**Marta Daniels
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