

Testimony of

Jeff Leake

Connecticut Education Association

Before the

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Re:

HJR 58 Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting

HJR 59 Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting

SB 901 AA Extending to June 30, 2021, Changes Implemented for the 2020 State Election as a Result of COVID-19

HB 6464 AA Extending to May 31, 2021, Several Changes Implemented for the 2020 State Election as a Result of COVID-19

February 22, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, and Representative Mastrofrancesco, and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I am Jeff Leake, President of the Connecticut Education Association, which represents educators from over 150 school districts in the state.

The Connecticut Education Association supports the SB 901, HB 6464, and House Joint Resolutions 58 and 59, each of which would expand fair and secure opportunities for citizens to cast their votes in an election.

Broad participation of citizens in the electoral process is the bedrock of a strong democracy. The proposals being heard today help to achieve this goal by addressing barriers to voting, such as time constraints, experienced by many working people in our state.

Connecticut's recent expansion of voting opportunities was driven by the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes that were implemented positively impacted voter participation and offer lessons for future elections regardless of a presence of public health emergencies. CEA supports the permanent implementation of policies providing for early voting and opportunities to cast absentee ballots regardless of reason.

Another bedrock of democracy is citizens' faith that our elections are fair and secure. Not only did the changes implemented in 2020 promote higher participation, they did so while ensuring the integrity of the election. The 2020 election saw record turnout in Connecticut, and across the nation. With over 1.8 million ballots cast in Connecticut, and 158 million across the U.S., incidents of fraud or mishandling of ballots have been few and inconsequential, despite demonstrably false and self-serving claims to the contrary made by some.

Furthermore, CEA condemns those who knowingly perpetuate myths of voter fraud to serve their political interests. As research clearly indicates (see for example the [Brennan Center](#)¹), the number of instances of voter fraud underscore how rare incidents truly are. The myth of voter fraud is in fact a myth. Arguments falsely citing voter fraud as a reason to suppress voting, or to make voting increasingly difficult, only serve to disenfranchise voters based on racial and socio-economic differences. They undermine voter participation and weaken the foundation of our democracy.

CEA commends the committee for bringing proposals forward that would increase citizens' participation in elections and with it, serve to strengthen our democracy.

¹ <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote/vote-suppression/myth-voter-fraud>