

What Is Early Voting?

Early Voting permits registered voters to cast their ballots before Election Day in person or by mail.

Currently, no excuse other than active military service, absence from the state, illness, religious barrier, or election official duties in a polling place other than your own allows a registered voter to vote other than on Election Day in Connecticut. The LWVCT believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote and encourages efforts to maximize voter participation which Early Voting enhances. We strongly support resolutions to amend the state constitution, which is necessary to vest the General Assembly with the authority to create an Early Voting system.

Why Early Voting?

Research shows early in-person voting

- Provides greater access to voting and increases voter satisfaction
- Eases stress on the voting system on Election Day
- Generates shorter lines on Election Day
- Allows for early identification and correction of registration errors and voting system glitches

Source: 2013 report *Early Voting: What Works* <http://www.brennancenter.org/publication/early-voting-what-works>
See also bipartisanpolicy.org/the-presidential-commission-on-election-administration

Legislative debate on the topic in 2018 foregrounded these benefits of Early Voting:

- Accommodates
 - Long-distance commuters;
 - Workers who may lose wages if they take time off from work day
 - Elderly or sick voters who may have “good days and bad days”
- Voters like it. More and more people take advantage of this convenience
- It influences candidate behaviors in a positive way. Candidates conduct voter mobilization efforts throughout the Early Voting period, which ultimately leads to increased voter contact and increased voter turnout
- Churches and other organizations have created a new tradition of voting together as a community with efforts like “souls to the polls”

Source: SOTS info sheet Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Permit Early Voting, 1/30/2018 and 2/22/19

How Does It Work Elsewhere?

- 39 states and Washington, D.C. use Early Voting
- CT is one of 15 states that still require an excuse to vote absentee. Unlike CT, 7 have another early voting option.
- Source: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx>

How Can Connecticut Establish Early Voting?

We must amend the state constitution to allow for Early Voting.

The state constitution explicitly states that voters “appear on Election Day” unless they meet one of the requirements for an absentee ballot. That constitutional language necessitates passing an amendment before Connecticut can pass an early voting law.

The proposed amendment does two things. First, it requires a minimum of three days of early voting prior to Election Day. Second, it removes language about absentee ballots that is duplicated in state statute.

Ultimately, after the constitutional amendment passes the general assembly will have to decide the details of how early voting will be designed, including the hours of voting, the number of polling places, and the days on which early voting will be held.

How Soon Can We Pass Early Voting?

The fastest way to make Early Voting a reality in Connecticut is to ensure both chambers of the 2019 state legislature pass **HJ 161** with 3/4ths majorities. The amendment can then be a ballot question for all Connecticut voters in 2020.

If the amendment passes with less than 3/4ths of legislators' votes, then it will need to pass a second time when the legislature convenes in 2021 and the voters of the state of Connecticut will have to wait until 2022 to approve or reject early voting.

How Much Will Early Voting Cost?

There is no hard evidence that early voting dramatically increases the cost of elections.

The amendment allows for enabling legislation to consider a minimal number of voting locations for early voting, rather than operating all polling places. It also requires only a modest number of early voting days, as opposed to multiple weeks.

What Will Voters Be Asked to Approve or Reject?

The likely language for the ballot question is:

"Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to provide a minimum of three days of early voting and to allow all voters to vote by absentee ballot?"*

*Source: Connecticut Secretary of the State office

What Can We Do Now to Support HJ 161/Early Voting?

- Attend March 13 Hearing on in Hartford to show your support for expanding voting opportunities (begins at 1:00 PM; see LWVCT on FB for schedule changes)
- Contact your state representatives to let them know how strongly you support Early Voting. Find your rep at www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp.

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