



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING FOR EARLY VOTING,
NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING, AND THE CONNECTICUT VOTING
RIGHTS ACT**

February 13, 2025

To: Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Connor Yakaitis, Deputy Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

The Connecticut League of Conservation Voters (CTLCV) strongly urges the legislature to fully fund equitable, accessible, and inclusive early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and the Connecticut Voting Rights Act (CTVRA). As an organization committed to environmental protection and a strong democracy, we recognize that a healthy environment depends on fair and accessible elections that allow all voices to be heard.

Equitable Access to the Ballot Box Requires Full Funding

Connecticut voters overwhelmingly approved early voting at the polls, with more than 850,000 voters participating in its first year. Early voting is extremely popular and necessary. To ensure that early voting and no-excuse absentee voting are equitable, accessible, and inclusive, we must appropriate adequate funding to their implementation. Connecticut voters deserve a fair opportunity to vote in a way that is easy, accessible, and convenient, and we cannot afford to implement no-excuse absentee voting the wrong way. The legislature must fully fund these initiatives so that all voters have better, fairer, and more equitable access to the ballot box.

Early Voting & No-Excuse Absentee Voting Increases Participation

By funding early voting and absentee voting, the legislature will help expand access to the ballot, especially for working families, seniors, voters with disabilities, and those living in communities disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices. Connecticut voters overwhelmingly approved early voting in 2022, and it is now the legislature's responsibility to ensure it is implemented effectively, with adequate resources to support local election officials.

The Connecticut Voting Rights Act Must Be Fully Funded

The CTVRA is a landmark law designed to prevent voter suppression and discrimination. Fully funding its implementation is essential to ensuring that all voters—especially those in historically disenfranchised communities—can

participate without undue barriers. Voting rights are fundamental to a functioning democracy, and funding our election processes, ballot needs, election worker training, and the Secretary of the State's office is crucial to ensuring the success of our democratic system in Connecticut.

Access to the ballot box is a racial justice issue, and Connecticut needs to do more to correct its record of restricting Black and Latine voters from exercising the right to vote. Our democracy is stronger when areas with histories of discriminating against voters of color receive additional oversight when they try to change their election policies. Passing the CTVRA was a key step toward making Connecticut a national leader on voting rights. Now, we must fully fund the CTVRA along with early voting and no-excuse absentee voting to continue our state's movement as a champion for voting rights. The CTVRA is the most comprehensive voting rights legislation in the country. Connecticut has the opportunity to be a national leader in voting rights access and fidelity.

Fair Elections Lead to Stronger Environmental Protections

When voting is accessible, leaders who prioritize environmental justice and climate action are more likely to be elected. Historically marginalized communities often bear the brunt of pollution and climate change, yet they face some of the greatest obstacles to voting. By fully funding early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and the CTVRA, Connecticut can ensure that these communities have a stronger voice in decisions that affect their health, environment, and future.

Conclusion

CTLCV urges the legislature to uphold its commitment to fair elections by fully funding early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and the CTVRA. Connecticut has an opportunity to set a national example in protecting both democracy and the environment. We urge you to take action and invest in a more inclusive, equitable, and participatory electoral system.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you to protect both our democracy and our environment.

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