



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting
House Joint Resolution 28, A Resolution Proposing a
State Constitutional Amendment to Permit Early Voting and
Senate Joint Resolution 31, A Resolution Proposing a
State Constitutional Amendment to Allow Early Voting**

Senator McLachlan, Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Kaley Lentini, and I am legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am here to testify in support of House Joint Resolution 28, A Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Permit Early Voting, and Senate Joint Resolution 31, A Resolution Proposing a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow Early Voting, which would provide voters with the opportunity to determine, via ballot measure, whether to adopt early voting in Connecticut.

As an organization committed to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution, the ACLU of Connecticut strongly supports measures to ensure equal access to the ballot box. Unfortunately, archaic language in the Connecticut Constitution prohibits early voting in our state. If the General Assembly passes these resolutions and voters approve a constitutional amendment, the legislature can move toward strengthening our democracy by adopting early voting.

Early voting would strengthen our democracy and our state. By creating more equal access to the ballot box, early voting gives more people a chance to make their voices heard. The legislature should embrace this chance to decrease congestion at the polls on Election Day, and improve the chances of vulnerable people to cast their ballots.

While early voting is good for everyone, it is particularly crucial for people who are vulnerable to disenfranchisement because of physical disabilities, lack of transportation, lack of childcare, unpredictable work schedules, or other limitations. A study of Ohio voters found that women, the elderly

and the poor are most likely to take advantage of early voting. A separate national study found that Black and Latino voters have an extra reason to vote early—they are between two to three times more likely than white voters to wait more than 30 minutes to vote in person at their polling places on Election Day.

To date, 37 states and the District of Columbia allow voters to cast their ballots early, without requiring excuses or justifications. Two additional states offer an alternative form of early voting. This makes Connecticut one of only 11 states nationwide that does not allow some form of early voting. Nearby, Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Jersey all allow early voting.

In the 2016 Presidential Election, long lines in some polling places, and record turnouts in others, served as a reminder that unexpected circumstances can disenfranchise and discourage citizens. When more people have a chance to make their voices heard through options like early voting, it strengthens our democracy. That is good news for everyone.

We encourage you to support H.J. 28 and S.J. 31.