



Legislative Testimony  
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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 479,  
An Act Designating Election Day as a State Holiday**

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

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 479, An Act Designating Election Day as a State Holiday.

The right to vote is a fundamental part of America's democracy, and the government should work to ensure that everyone has access to the ballot box. As an organization that defends the right to vote and believes that enfranchisement is an incredibly important way for people to participate in our society, the ACLU-CT supports this bill, which would designate Election Day as a state holiday.

Designating Election Day as a state holiday would improve voter turnout. If Connecticut recognized Election Day as a state holiday, thousands of state employees would have the day off of work. This would allow them more time to travel to their polling locations and vote. Private employers would also be more likely to give employees the day off if it was recognized as a state holiday, further increasing voter turnout.

While this bill would be good for everyone, it would be particularly helpful 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 because voting on Election Day can be very difficult for them. Having the day off or work would help these populations get to the polls. A separate national study found that Black and Latino voters 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. If these voters did not have to report to work on Election Day, it would give them more time to vote and have their voices heard.

For many people, it is difficult to find time to vote on a work day while the polls are open. A United States Census Bureau survey found that the main reason 14.3% of people did not vote in the 2016 general election was their busy schedule. According to Pew Research Center, people who did not vote in that election “were more likely to be younger, less educated, less affluent, and nonwhite.”

Designating Election Day as a state holiday would place Connecticut in line with states across the nation. For state workers in 13 states, including nearby New Jersey and New York, Election Day is a paid holiday. People around the country, regardless of their political party, support the designation of Election Day as a holiday. A Pew Research Center poll found that “Americans on both sides of the aisle support making Election Day a national holiday,” In fact, “71% of Democrats and 59% of Republicans favor the idea.”

We urge the committee to support Senate Bill 479 to allow more people the opportunity to vote on Election Day.