

TOWN OF WESTON

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Date: March 4, 2021

To: Senator Louis J. Luchini, Senate Chair
Representative Chris Caiazzo, House Chair
And members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

From: Dwayne Young, Town Clerk and Registrar of Voters

Re: LD 208 – An Act to Expand Access to Absentee Ballots

Honorable Sirs,

Thank you for allowing testimony to be heard on this matter. I am in opposition to LD 208 as a whole. My reasons are as follows:

Lines 10 and 11:

To repeal the current law and eliminate the special circumstances clause for requesting an absentee ballot. The voters of this State have, at a minimum, 30 days in which to request an absentee ballot. The three days set aside for special circumstance serve two purposes. The first and most important is the ability of a voter to participate if they truly cannot make it to the polls due to an unforeseen circumstance and have not already requested an absentee ballot, which is a decision that they would have made by themselves. The second, being that clerks need the time immediately before an election to finalize voter lists, set up polling stations and to ensure that all election workers are in-fact going to show up and find replacements for those that are not.

Lines 14 through 17:

This change would allow a third-party runner to delay the return of a voter's absentee ballot until 8pm on the night of the election. The current law states that the absentee must be returned within two days of the ballot being issued. This change opens the door for the opportunity for lost ballots, ballots returned too late and thus rejected and the perception of potential voter fraud. These third-party runners are often not even known by the voter, but part of a get out the vote campaign and have no legal obligation to

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ensure the prompt return. This proposed change could call into question the integrity of the ballots cast and the election process as a whole.

Lines 22 and 23:

The act of allowing a voter to vote absentee in the presence of the clerk right up until 8pm on election day is absurd. In many instances, the voter would be within feet or at least in the same building as the polls. This appears to be an attempt to allow voters to not have to wait in line at the polls. An option they already have for at least the 30 days prior to the election via the absentee process. The logistics for a larger community would include concerns that an individual absentee votes in the presence of the clerk at the municipal office and then drives to the polling location and votes there as well. There is no way for the clerk to annotate the incoming voter list that the individual has already voted. Another concern is that all the absentee ballots cast in the presence of the clerk on election day will have to be processed after the polls close at the polling location, thus extending the length of time required to obtain results and additional cost. Those costs are born by the municipality not the State.

While I understand the concept that this section of the bill would lessen the disenfranchisement of voters and increase turnout, I disagree. The only reason voters may feel disenfranchised under the current law is because they choose to wait until the eleventh hour to cast a vote. Voter turnout will most likely not increase but just shift to absentee instead of in person.

Voting is a right of the people, but with any right, there comes responsibility. That responsibility must be shared between the voter and the election system, and both must be held accountable for their actions or inactions. There are absolute reasons for amending the system but substituting convenience for integrity is not one of them.

Cordially,

Dwayne Young, CMC, Clerk/Registrar Town of Weston

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