

**Testimony of
Connecticut Secretary of the State Stephanie Thomas
Before the Subcommittee on Elections
of the Committee on House Administration
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Connecticut, the Constitution State

*A Supporter of State Sovereignty
and Strong Elections from the Start*



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Dear Subcommittee on Elections of the Committee on House Administration Chairwoman Lee, Ranking Member Sewell, and distinguished committee members Johnson, Loudermilk, Murphy, and Miller. I am privileged to submit this written testimony and to have the opportunity to speak before you.

The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy—an inalienable right that must be both accessible and secure. In 2024, Connecticut reinforced this principle with its first-ever early in-person voting period, giving voters 14 days of additional opportunities to cast their ballots. The success of this initiative was no accident; it was the result of Connecticut's long history of expanding voter access while maintaining the highest standards of election security. From the Fundamental Orders of 1639 to modern innovations in election administration, our state has continuously prioritized engagement, integrity, and inclusivity in its democratic processes.

Central to this success is the partnership between the Secretary of the State's Office and Connecticut's 169 municipalities, ensuring elections are conducted with efficiency, bi-partisan transparency, and security. This collaboration extends beyond just facilitating voting—it also includes efforts to educate and inspire civic engagement at all levels.

Despite these successes, recent federal proposals threaten to disrupt our well-established systems. The SAVE Act and the "Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections" presidential order impose costly, unnecessary, and restrictive federal mandates that would disrupt our state's robust and finely tuned election infrastructure. Rather than imposing these burdens, Congress and the White House should look to aspects of Connecticut's careful and secure approach as a model, rather than an obstacle.

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Connecticut's Fundamental Orders of 1639: America's Foundation of Self-Governance

The first written constitution in the American colonies, Connecticut's Fundamental Orders of 1639 established a system of representative government where leaders were elected by the majority; government powers were distributed to create a system of checks and balances; and towns maintained control over local decisions while operating within the Connecticut Colony's unified government.

Among the people strongly influenced by this document was Roger Sherman, one of Connecticut's and America's Founding Fathers. One of the five primary authors of the Declaration of Independence, Sherman in 1777 also helped draft, and was one of the signers of, the Articles of Confederation, which united America's first 13 states and served as our nation's first frame of government during the American Revolution.

Sherman was a strong advocate for state sovereignty with a limited central government, which the Articles of Confederation established. But like many of our country's founders, he quickly recognized weaknesses in the Articles that needed to be changed.

To help correct those weaknesses, he became one of Connecticut's delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia to help write the U.S. Constitution. By then, **Connecticut's Fundamental Orders had successfully been in place for almost 150 years, giving Sherman the opportunity to demonstrate to fellow delegates how a working representative government could function in America.**

The Convention consisted of four months of impassioned, rigorous debate, but also much compromise. However, one thing neither Connecticut's delegates nor the majority of others would compromise on was a change to voting rights.

Fearful of creating a government with the potential to become as powerful and tyrannical as the British monarchy they just fought to free themselves of, they retained the same emphasis on state sovereignty within the Constitution that they established in the Articles of Confederation to ensure states maintained control over critical areas like taxation, law enforcement, governance, and voting. Said Sherman in a letter handwritten in December 1787 to "A Citizen of New Haven":

One excellency of the Constitution is that when the government of the United States acts within its proper bounds, it will be the interest of the legislatures of the particular

States to support it, but when it over leaps those bounds and interferes with the rights of the State governments, it will be their interest powerful enough to check it; but the powers of each distinction between their jurisdictions will be So obvious, that there will be no great danger of interference or contention between the governments of the particular States & the United States.

The new U.S. Constitution he and his colleagues helped create safely ensured voting laws and processes would be regulated by those best suited to do so: the states themselves, whose leaders' intimate knowledge of their populations' needs and values were best and most appropriately suited for the task, and whose oversight of election law would best protect individual liberties.

Expansion of Safe, Secure Voting in Connecticut

Today, 238 years after the Constitution was signed, Connecticut is still committed to improving our democracy, and toward that end recently adopted a series of reforms focused on building a more accessible and secure voting system. Long known as the "Land of Steady Habits" for its deliberate approach to governance and reform, state leaders and voters carefully considered and passed legislation implementing best practices across the board, while also considering our decentralized collaborative where local governments play a central role.

The most significant and recent reforms have included the adoption of early in-person voting, approved by voters by constitutional amendment in 2022 and same-day registration during the early voting period. The rollout of these reforms provides an effective model of how **deliberate, thoughtful change can improve the electoral process, as well as how reforms can be tailored to integrate with a state's already robust institutions and infrastructure.**

Implementation of Early Voting in November 2024

“ In November 2024, 1.79 million Connecticut electors cast a ballot, resulting in an overall 76% turnout. More than 740,000 voters – representing roughly 41% of the electorate – cast their ballot during our 14-day early voting period. ”

To implement early in-person voting for the November 2024 election, the Secretary of the State adopted a proactive approach to provide municipalities with as much information and support as possible.

Collaborative approach to creation of training materials. The agency prepared detailed training manuals and presented a draft to every registrar and town clerk in the state to solicit feedback. We received over fifty pages of notes. As a result of viewing every comment, we were able to close potential loopholes and tighten security and chain-of-custody procedures, creating a better system.

Established a baseline across all jurisdictions through the creation of universal forms, weekly updated FAQs, and other support materials to ensure that every municipality, regardless of size, achieved the same baseline information, education, and materials.

Comprehensive online learning management system created for moderators and poll workers, as well as webinars, and an extensive training program in partnership with the University of Connecticut.

Spot training for our decentralized election workforce. As many registrars work part time (for some of the small, rural towns, barely a few hours a month), we provided multiple online and in-person office hours to answer remaining questions and ensure officials understood and were ready for the new procedures.

Real time support for election workers. During the early voting period, Office of the Secretary of the State attorneys, election officers, IT staff, and top officials were available on Zoom to respond to inquiries and provide support in real time. As the voting progressed, the agency offered a dedicated phone line to respond to inquiries.

Real time hotline for the public. In addition to an extensive public education campaign, detailed in a later section of this document, the state encourages real time intervention by offering a dedicated help line where callers with concerns or questions about elections are connected to attorneys and elections officers at the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC), our elections investigative agency.

Additionally, our agency and SEEC officials meet two times per day during early voting and more frequently on Election Day to discuss and address any issues affecting voting access or election security.

Updated technology. To accommodate early voting, the Secretary of the State's IT department had to make changes to its Centralized Voter Registration System (CVRS). This change made it possible for local officials to check in voters in real time, ensuring they had not voted at a different early voting location or cast an absentee ballot. This provided both election officials and voters with confidence in the overall system.

Thanks to these efforts, early voting was a major success.

Connecticut's Robust Election Infrastructure

This success with early voting, however, could only be achieved thanks to an already existing strong, robust voting infrastructure that included:

Paper ballots. Connecticut state law mandates that all 169 municipalities use paper ballots, ensuring a verifiable paper trail. This in turn ensures for accurate audits and recounts, enhancing election integrity.

Secure voting machines with no internet connection. Our voting machines are not connected to the internet, significantly reducing the risk of electronic intrusions or interference.

Stringent pre-election testing. Before every election, registrars of voters conduct rigorous logic and accuracy testing on all voting machines to confirm proper ballot coding and vote tabulation.

Emergency contingency planning. Connecticut State Law already required every municipality to have an emergency plan for elections. But with the addition of early voting, Connecticut had to move from one day of voting to fourteen days of voting, which raised new potential issues. Registrars of voters and town clerks participated in a first-of-its kind Emergency Preparedness Exercise in 2024, along with our Fusion Center, to help develop emergency contingency plans to address potential disruptions. These plans outlined strategies for managing situations such as (1) shortages or absences of poll workers; (2) power outages; (3) voting machine malfunctions; (4) severe weather or natural disasters; and (5) security concerns or disturbances at polling places. On the rare occasion when election officials faced one of these issues, everyone involved had guidelines and procedures in place to respond effectively.

Bipartisan oversight. Every polling place is staffed by bipartisan teams from the administrators to check-in clerks to the ballot distributors. Every official takes an oath to uphold state election laws and work together to ensure a secure, fair, and transparent electoral process.

Post-election audits. Audits of at least 5% of the state's voting districts (i.e., polling locations) are required after every federal, state, or municipal regular election or primary. They compare a portion of the paper ballots cast by voters with the results produced by a voting machine. These locations are selected at random by our office and conducted by registrars of voters.

Transparency and public observation. Transparency has always been a core principle of Connecticut's election process. Members of the public are welcome to observe election procedures, including absentee ballot counting, post-election audits, and recounts in close contests.

Election enforcement and fraud prevention. Connecticut maintains a dedicated election enforcement agency, the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC). Staffed by experienced nonpartisan professionals, SEEC investigates reports of election fraud or irregularities and refers cases for prosecution when warranted.

Early intervention during elections. Our office also runs the Secretary's Legal Assistance Program. This project, formed by The Connecticut Bar Association and the Secretary of the State, trains volunteer attorneys to assist the Secretary of the State by serving in person at a polling place or agreeing to be on call to respond to problems during early voting or on Election Day.

Extensive security training and collaboration. State agencies have always provided extensive information technology training, support, and resources to ensure that election processes are safe for any malignant intrusion. Election officials are in regular contact and have relationships with partners in federal and state government, who assist with cyber and physical security, share information, and help plan for election events and respond to incidents. We provide a more detailed overview of these joint efforts below.

Election monitor program. To further improve election security, the legislature created a procedure to appoint election monitors in districts where additional oversight might be required, providing additional guidance to local election authorities. In all cases, **the focus has been to relentlessly target fraud, avoiding broad, unfocused solutions** that might potentially disenfranchise eligible voters by creating unreasonable barriers or requirements to cast a ballot.

List Maintenance. Connecticut dedicates considerable resources to keeping its voter registration file up to date. Registrars of voters regularly update records when they receive notifications of new registrations, address changes, or deaths. They also conduct an annual list maintenance canvass of voters. Our office also regularly cross-checks its voter list to find possible duplicates and coordinates with the state's jury administration records to verify voter information.

The state is a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a multi-state partnership designed to improve the accuracy of voter registration records and increase access to voter registration. We utilize the cross-state movers, in-state movers, the deceased, and duplicate reports offered through ERIC. By leveraging data from multiple sources, including the Social Security Administration's Limited Access Death Master File and the U.S. Postal Service's National Change of Address system, ERIC helps Connecticut keep its voter rolls up to date.

Impact of the Elections Executive Order and the SAVE Act

Thanks to Connecticut's Founding Fathers, we have long been a leader in conducting secure, accessible, and fair elections. As outlined in this testimony, our election system has been carefully designed to balance security and accessibility, ensuring that every eligible voter can cast their ballot safely and efficiently. However, recent federal efforts through the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act and presidential order "Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections" would shift key aspects of election oversight from the state to federal government, introducing new regulations that could disrupt Connecticut's well-established election process and have the exact opposite effect than intended.

Unfunded Mandates Strain Part-Time Workforce, Threatening Security. Connecticut does not have a county form of government, requiring an election system that operates at the municipal level. In our decentralized system, each of our 169 municipalities administers its own elections. In these towns and cities, election-related services are conducted by one Republican and one Democrat registrar of voters and absentee ballots are handled by a town clerk. All but a couple of these positions are elected and only 17 municipalities have full-time registrars. The remainder work varying hours, as few as one hour a week or by appointment only. **Although our structure makes election administration in Connecticut both bipartisan and collaborative, it is difficult to absorb time-intensive mandates.**

Unlike states with centralized county election offices, each town funds their own elections. Voter registrations are administered by local personnel, often operating with lean budgets and part-time staff, with limited capacity to process large volumes of applications.

Database Requirements, a Further Strain on the System. Changes also include an unfunded mandate that would require each of Connecticut's 169 municipalities to cross-check and verify voter registration information against federal databases — another requirement our towns and cities do not have the staffing or finances to do. The costs associated with database access, training, and new voter registration forms shipped to 169 towns would be substantial. Towns would need to restructure voter registration staffing, relying on less knowledgeable workers potentially leading to errors. Additionally, towns

would have to allocate funds for training, reducing resources available for other crucial areas such as registrar continuing education, poll worker training, and voter outreach.

Voter Registration Rolls Put at Risk. Requiring every municipality to access federal databases raises concerns about maintaining the integrity of Connecticut’s voter file, which has long been safeguarded through controlled, limited access. Currently, access is strictly limited—only designated personnel can modify and add data, ensuring that voter records remain secure and accurate. To meet federal requirements, lower-level, newly hired staff—who may not have the expertise to properly navigate these databases—would be granted access to highly sensitive voter information. This not only increases the risk of mistakes in voter records but also creates vulnerabilities that could be exploited, whether through human error, cyber threats, or potential misuse of data. Compounding this security issue is a practical one. The software Connecticut uses for its voter files lacks the fields needed to input citizenship data, because non-citizens are already prohibited from registering.

In-Person Requirement Disenfranchises Voters. Beyond logistics, the SAVE Act would actively disenfranchise key groups of Connecticut voters. Our state is home to many active-duty members of the U.S. Navy’s submarine force. These servicemembers are often deployed with little notice on underwater exercises, where they lack access to mail and the internet for months at a time. Requiring these young service members to submit a passport in order to register to vote would strip them of their right to vote while they are actively defending our nation. Similarly, incarcerated individuals who retain their voting rights, in-patient residents of mental health facilities, and elderly voters in long-term care homes often lack the necessary documentation or ability to physically appear at registrar offices.

Furthermore, requiring in-person registration discriminates against voters with disabilities who may not have reliable transportation to reach municipal offices during limited hours. Connecticut has always prioritized accessibility in its elections, and these restrictions run counter to our state’s commitment to ensuring every eligible voter has a voice.

Citizenship Documentation Sets Up Election Workers for Failure. Currently, our registrars of voters are trained to recognize our "drive-only" licenses which cannot be used to register, and to identify potential inconsistencies in registration paperwork, but they are not trained to authenticate the wide range of documents the SAVE Act would require, such as birth certificates, divorce decrees, and marriage licenses. Without specialized training, election workers—many of whom serve in part-time or seasonal roles—would be more prone to errors in determining voter eligibility. Even experienced registrars would struggle to accurately assess unfamiliar documents, leading to a less secure voter verification system.

Imposing an unnecessary, complex, and inconsistently applied documentation requirement would not strengthen our elections—it would only serve to disenfranchise eligible voters and overburden local election offices.

Connecticut Already Meets or Exceeds Federal Election Security Standards.

Connecticut already ensures the integrity of our elections through rigorous list maintenance, strict adherence to the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and the Voting Rights Act (VRA), as well as with the exclusive use of paper ballots with no internet connectivity in any part of the voting process. Additionally, our state law prohibits foreign money from influencing elections and ballot initiatives, reinforcing our commitment to fair and transparent electoral practices.

Rather than imposing one-size-fits-all federal rules, the federal government should recognize Connecticut’s success in securing elections while maintaining accessibility. The new or proposed federal requirements would not only disrupt our system but would potentially disenfranchise thousands of voters, particularly those who already face barriers to participation. Connecticut has demonstrated that election security and voter accessibility are not mutually exclusive. We urge policymakers to respect state sovereignty and protect the rights of all voters, which for Connecticut neither the SAVE Act nor presidential order do.

**Robust Elections Require a Robust
State-Local-Federal Partnership**

A robust election system is not the work of any single entity. It is a partnership between the state, municipalities, and the federal government. When this balance is respected, elections run smoothly, with policies tailored to local needs while still maintaining national standards of security.

Strong Local Influence. Strong, bi-partisan local control allows elections to be administered by individuals who understand their communities, ensuring that voting processes align with local needs within the confines of federal and state law. Meanwhile, the Secretary of the State’s Office provides essential training, security infrastructure, and guidance, helping towns navigate the complexities of election law and emerging cybersecurity threats. This decentralized, collaborative approach ensures that elections remain accessible, transparent, and free from undue partisan influence.

State Support Aids Local Efforts. A key example of this successful partnership is the cybersecurity protections provided by the state to safeguard voter registration and election infrastructure. Connecticut's Voter Registration System (CVRS) is not exposed to the internet, minimizing the risk of cyberattacks. Instead, municipalities access it through a secure private network, preventing unauthorized access. Also, to further bolster security, the state:

- **Provides election officials with monthly SANS Online Security Awareness Training.** This partnership, funded by federal grants, allows us to share new modules with registrars and town clerks each month, equipping them and their staff with the knowledge to recognize and mitigate cybersecurity threats. Without this support, each municipality would have to stand up its own training.
- **Monitors network traffic for potential threats.** Advanced monitoring tools include three Albert Sensors that track and analyze network traffic for potential security breaches, with one dedicated to the CVRS network.
- **Utilizes the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) to provide municipalities with critical threat intel, security education, and election security alerts.** Through our partnership, the MS-ISAC provides election security alerts, incident response services, endpoint detection and response tools, webinars, and trainings free to underserved municipalities.
- **Works with the Connecticut Military Department (CTMD) Cyber Division to perform cyber security assessments of each of the state's 169 municipalities.** Through this partnership, the CTMD developed a "SOTS Municipal Elections Security Best Practices" guide based on federal best practice standards. Each municipality was also given the choice to receive an on-site IT election infrastructure risk assessment visit from the CTMD. All but 11 municipalities participated.

Federal Assistance Essential for Municipalities. While elections remain fundamentally a state and local responsibility, voluntary partnerships with the federal government play a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of our electoral process. The ability for states to collaborate with federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), provides valuable resources that enhance election security without infringing upon state sovereignty. In Connecticut, these voluntary federal partnerships have been instrumental in helping municipalities defend against ever-evolving cybersecurity threats while maintaining full control over election administration.

- **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).** One of the most valuable contributions of the federal government has come through the CISA, which has provided a range of essential services to state and local election officials to help them strengthen their digital defenses, ensuring voter registration databases and election systems remain secure from cyberattacks. Additionally, CISA conducts physical security assessments that aid local election officials in identifying vulnerabilities in polling places and election offices, allowing for proactive measures to be taken to protect these critical facilities.
- **The Election Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC)** has also been an indispensable resource, allowing officials to stay informed about emerging cyber threats occurring in other jurisdictions. By having real-time awareness of potential risks, Connecticut election administrators can take swift action to mitigate threats before they impact the state’s electoral process. This type of proactive intelligence-sharing enhances overall election security while preserving the decentralized nature of election administration.
- **Economies of Scale.** Beyond intelligence and security assessments, CISA has also provided invaluable training opportunities, including incident response planning resources and tabletop exercises designed to prepare state and local officials for various threats. When our election workforce expressed safety concerns in 2024, CISA was able to conduct two de-escalation in-person training sessions which put them at ease.
- **Global Threat Monitoring.** The federal government’s role in election security extends beyond technical assistance to include intelligence briefings, both classified and unclassified, that provide election officials with a clearer understanding of foreign threats to our electoral systems. This high-level information allows states like Connecticut to implement security strategies that counteract foreign interference while maintaining the integrity and independence of our election processes — something that, despite a dismantling of CISA — we hope will continue.

Ultimately, these voluntary partnerships with the federal government strengthen state and municipal election systems while respecting the principles of state sovereignty.

Civic Engagement & Empowerment

While changes to election laws and reforms are critical to ensuring a fair democratic process, they are only effective if citizens are informed and actively engaged in shaping the future of their communities. In a nation built on the principle of government by the people, it is essential that every citizen feels empowered to participate in shaping the decisions that impact their lives. Civic engagement is not just a right; it is a responsibility, and it starts with civic literacy.

Our work over the past two years has focused on fostering civic education and engagement in communities across Connecticut, with particular

Please see Appendix for more on our civics programs.

emphasis on building trust, combating misinformation, and providing tools that help people become informed, engaged citizens. Our initiatives—whether they involve direct outreach to community groups, providing clear and accessible information about voting and civic participation, or leveraging the power of partnerships—are all driven by one goal: to increase **civic participation** and **empower individuals to make informed decisions**.

Our goals are to equip people with the knowledge they need to participate in the democratic process with confidence. I am proud to share the strides we have made in this effort, which are grounded in our commitment to serving as a trusted messenger and a resource for all residents.

Building Trust Through Direct Engagement. In 2023, we committed ourselves to meeting with as many community groups, leaders, and organizations as possible. We reached out to over **150 groups**, including chambers of commerce, foundations, businesses, universities, state representatives, and a wide array of community groups, nonprofits, and advocates. Our goal was simple: to listen. By proactively meeting with these groups, we aimed not only to understand the challenges they face but also to learn how we could best assist in overcoming them. This was an essential first step in building trust and forming meaningful, productive partnerships.

Cultivating Civic Literacy. In our work, we've placed a strong emphasis on civic literacy—ensuring that citizens have the information they need to make informed decisions and participate in the democratic process. One of the ways we've done this is by creating **Civics 101**, an accessible online platform designed to educate residents on the basics of voting, elections, and civic responsibilities. Our dedicated website, Civics101.ct.gov, simplifies

complex legal and electoral jargon into plain language, making these resources easy to understand and share.

- Our team has also designed downloadable, printable handouts—available in multiple languages including Spanish, Hindi, French, and Haitian Creole—that provide clear, concise information about voter registration, voting processes, and deadlines. These materials are complemented by videos, social media graphics, and even tabletop signs to ensure that information is reaching as many people as possible in an accessible way.
- The **Power of Civics** is a key component of our Civics 101 program, where we have curated dozens of actions individuals can take—beyond voting—to educate themselves and engage year-round.
- Our **Civically Engagement Organization (CEO)** program works with businesses, nonprofits, and religious organizations to serve as trusted messengers to their respective communities. Through this program, these partners gain access to a toolkit of trusted, factual resources—ranging from social media graphics to educational videos—that help them engage with their communities in a nonpartisan, informative manner. Each organization utilizes the tools in a manner that works for them. A newspaper participant created a voter guide for their town, our WNBA team made social media videos, and a corporation held a lunch and learn for their employees.

Recognizing Poll Workers, Municipalities, & Grassroots Engagement. Another critical aspect of our work is recognizing and appreciating those who make elections run smoothly—our poll workers.

- We hold **Poll Worker Appreciation** events in towns and cities all over Connecticut to publicly acknowledge their hard work and dedication, shining a light on their essential role in the democratic process. By celebrating their efforts, we help foster respect for the election process and encourage others to consider contributing their time and skills as poll workers. In 2024, over 3,300 individuals completed the poll worker interest form on our website.
- Our annual **Democracy Cup** bestows an award each year to municipalities with the highest voter turnout. Each community awarded the Democracy Cup is able to host and display a trophy.

- We also made it a priority to **engage directly with communities regardless of political party or location**, rarely turning down invitations to attend or speak at events, whether they be town hall meetings, local fairs, or community event.

Youth Engagement & Education.

- One of our most exciting initiatives over the past year has been the **Next Gen Elections** program, made possible by a Help American Vote College Program grant from the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission. This program is designed to engage young people in the electoral process by offering paid training for college students to become poll workers. These students, mentored by registrars of voters, are trained as moderators and placed in voting locations throughout the state. Our first cohort of 40 students served at the polls a combined total of over 800 hours and in a post-election survey, cited that they would be 80% more likely to continue participating in elections following their experience in the program.
- As part of our continued efforts to engage and empower the next generation of civic leaders, our office partners with colleges and universities across Connecticut to provide **internship opportunities** in areas such as policy research, outreach, and graphic design. These internships offer students the chance to generate fresh ideas and take the lead on projects, such as our most recent initiative, VOICE CT.
- **VOICE CT—Voicing Our Ideas for Civic Engagement in Connecticut.** This new college intern-led initiative is designed to give high school students across Connecticut the opportunity to shape their own civic life with assistance from our office. Students are invited to share their unique ideas and perspectives on how public officials and government agencies can better encourage youth participation in civic life. Through VOICE CT, our office aims to listen—to learn from students about what actions, resources, and messages would inspire greater youth involvement in civic activities.
- We also focused our efforts on **National Voter Registration Day**, partnering with colleges and universities across Connecticut to raise awareness and reduce confusion around how to register and vote while in college. Through campus events, a dedicated press conference, and an online toolkit, tailored specifically to college students, the program addressed the unique challenges they face in navigating the registration process.

Conclusion

Elections must reflect the needs and values of the people they serve, which is why states must retain the authority to oversee and manage their own electoral processes.

Connecticut's success in expanding voter participation, while maintaining the integrity of its elections, demonstrates that state-led innovation is key to strengthening democracy.

I am honored to have had the opportunity to submit this testimony. Collaboration plays a vital role in the success of elections. Our democracy is a collaborative responsibility, and we all benefit when we share ideas. As we continue to work together for the strongest democracy possible, I urge Congress to uphold the fundamental right of every eligible American to vote, and to uphold the fundamental right of every state to run elections without unnecessary barriers.

Appendix

Activity	Description	Reach
	Plain-language handouts designed to be easily downloaded from Civics101.ct.gov.	Used statewide by schools, municipal government offices, community groups, and more.
	Members receive access to an online toolkit with resources to spread the word in their communities.	Includes over 250 businesses, non-profits, religious entities, and towns.
Civics Trivia 	Trivia hosted by Secretary Thomas for young children and their families.	Hosted at libraries, Boys & Girls Clubs, and other community organizations.
Connect & Cut 	Secretary Thomas visits barbershops and hair salons for a haircut and discussion about civics.	Videos are posted on social media to spread the message.
Lawn Signs 	People design their own nonpartisan messages on painted-over lawn signs at fairs and festivals.	Over 200 signs deployed each year!
Poll Worker Appreciation Events 	Celebrates the hard work of poll workers to recruit and build trust in communities.	Over 400 citations awarded for 10+ years of service to poll workers in 23 towns.
National Voter Registration Day 	NVRD efforts on college campuses to address unique challenges of voting when away from home.	Partnered with over 20 campuses across the state.
NEXTGEN ELECTIONS	Trains the next generation of senior election workers.	60 students representing over 15 CT colleges and universities.
The Power of Civics	PowerofCivics.ct.gov outlines ways for anyone to get civically engaged.	Used statewide by schools, community groups, and more.
Voter Education in Prisons 	Civics education materials on inmate tablets and voter registration events.	All 13 facilities in CT.
VOICE CT 	Voicing Our Ideas for Civic Engagement in CT – program for high school students.	Over 60 respondents in our first cycle.