



Testimony of The National Vote at Home Coalition In Support of Vermont's S15

Thank you Madam Chair and committee members for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the National Vote at Home Coalition in support of S15. We would like to start by thanking and congratulating you on the success of your 2020 elections. Vermont stepped up to the incredible challenges that 2020 presented voters with more options to have their voices heard, and we are grateful for the leadership of the Secretary Condos and the Vermont Legislature. Because the measures adopted last year were temporary, we are pleased to offer the support of the National Vote at Home Coalition as the legislature considers future changes. We are a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to making sure every American can vote in secure, safe, accessible, and equitable elections by expanding vote-at-home systems.

We have been impressed by and grateful for the work the legislature has been putting in to find immediate and cost effective ways to strengthen the voting process, to ensure efficiencies and cost-savings for local and state government, and to ensure Vermont's democracy is as secure, accessible and functioning for immediate elections and for the generations to come. We are enthusiastic supporters of S15 and are grateful for the opportunity to speak to a few of the pieces of the bill that we think will be most impactful to voters.

MAILING BALLOTS TO ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS

We applaud the effort to transition to sending out ballots to all voters permanently for general elections which will give voters even greater access to the ballot and could make 2020's increases in turnout the new normal. We believe fundamentally that the more options a voter has to cast a ballot, the more engaged the electorate will be and the healthier our democracy will be.

VOTE HOME

There are also numerous advantages to local clerks including a reduction in administrative burden and many opportunities for cost savings.

BALLOT RETURN OPTIONS

Prepaid postage, another innovation Vermont implemented during the pandemic, is yet another voter-centric solution and we are thrilled to see it included in S15. By making drop boxes a permanent option, the state can reduce the cost of prepaid postage while maintaining more options for voters.

CURE PROCESS

By creating a cure process to correct deficient ballot envelopes, Vermont can further reduce its overall ballot rejection rate and create more confidence in the election process. Voters will greatly benefit from the notification of an error from their clerk and we are grateful that Vermont is taking such strides to make sure every voice is heard.

PREPROCESSING OF BALLOTS

We also applaud Vermont for giving clerks the option to preprocess ballots 30 days before the election in 2020 and strongly supportive of it being codified into the law. Clerks used this flexibility in the 2020 general election, and were able to make sure over 98% of ballots were counted by 9am the day after the election.