



August 10, 2020

Secretary of State
State of Connecticut
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford CT 06106

Dear Secretary Merrill,

Verified Voting writes concerning the exclusion of absentee ballots from Connecticut's post-election audit. Connecticut made the right decision for election integrity when the state passed legislation in 2007 mandating post-election audits. Christopher Krebs, director of the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, recently testified that "the ability to conduct post-election audits is critical to establishing the integrity of the election." Unfortunately, the anticipated massive surge of absentee ballots in 2020 threatens the credibility of the audit. As you know, Connecticut generally exempts absentee ballots, along with hand-counted ballots and election day registration ballots, from its audit. We urge you to broaden the audit this year to include absentee ballots.

An audit's credibility depends on whether the audit sample is reasonably representative of all ballots cast. Excluding absentee ballots is undesirable even when they comprise less than ten percent of ballots cast. But in a year where half or more of all ballots may be absentee, failing to check whether they have been counted correctly is dangerous. Absentee ballots will pose a tempting target not only for hackers, but rhetorically for anyone who wants to undermine trust in Connecticut elections. This risk is unacceptable and, fortunately, unnecessary.

We understand the pressures facing state and local election officials this year. Fortunately, as Luther Weeks of Connecticut Citizen Election Audit has pointed out, Connecticut's machine-assisted audit system can facilitate conducting audits that include absentee ballots. The system, developed by your office in cooperation with the University of Connecticut, has proven itself in use. When a random sample of audited ballots is manually checked, as was done in 2019, this system supports careful audits without extensive hand counts.

An increase in absentee voting inevitably will raise questions about ballot handling, adjudication, and security as well as tabulation. Accordingly, we agree with Weeks that an independent audit of *all* absentee ballot processes, culminating in tabulation, should take place. It is prudent to devote some of the available federal funds to these basic election security measures.

We further urge that, to the fullest possible extent, these audit enhancements should be implemented for the August primary. This timeline provides an opportunity for further adjustments and improvements before the larger election in November.

We hope you will act to keep Connecticut's post-election audit an effective safeguard and as a positive example for other states and local jurisdictions in this year's important elections.

Sincerely,



Marian K. Schneider, President
Verified Voting Foundation

