

Op-Ed: Legislature Must Give Special Session Measures Due Consideration



On July 23, the Connecticut House of Representatives was in session to discuss changes to Connecticut's absentee voter laws, police accountability reform, and important healthcare changes as the industries adjust to added challenges treating patients during Covid-19. The Senate is expected to take up those bills today, July 28.

In these unprecedented times, the legislature is using unprecedented methods to affect some major changes to Connecticut law. We cannot let the pandemic or the emotionally charged atmosphere force us to rush through these expansive and consequential bills. These are important matters that require careful consideration, public input and proper process.

On the issue of police accountability reform, I do support taking a closer look at the accountability and transparency of Connecticut's police force. As the ranking senator on the Public Safety Committee I have been very invested and led the recent measures proposed to strengthen police oversight and social justice. I would recommend the legislature fully examine any unintended consequences to law enforcement working to maintain public safety and to municipal financial and legal liabilities that would occur if law enforcement lost its qualified immunity.

The short two-day notice we received for the virtual "public hearing" has me concerned

that the legislative body is taking a rushed approach to handling a very important and emotionally charged issue affecting many people in and out of law enforcement.

I have received an incredible amount of input and suggestions from my constituents and law enforcement on how and if the legislature should enact any police accountability reforms. I appreciate each person taking the time to share their thoughts on the proposed changes to an integral part of our everyday lives.

On the issue of Connecticut absentee voter laws, the rules surrounding a voter's ability to vote absentee needs our immediate attention. I support expanding the regulations to include people voting absentee so as not to put themselves at risk of contracting Covid-19, or any illness for that matter, due to their compromised immune systems.

We must approve whatever measures necessary to legitimize the changes enacted by the Connecticut Secretary of the State for the 2020 primary and general elections. I would urge my colleagues to not let the perfect be the enemy of the good and make sure we are putting voter's health and safety first in the immediate future.

Looking ahead, any constitutional change must go through the proper, legal process to make permanent changes to the Connecticut constitution to enable these expanded absentee rules in the long term.

On the issue of health care cost concerns, two items to be addressed in the July Special Sessions are capping the price of insulin and expanding insurance providers' requirement to provide coverage for services provided via telehealth.

The rest of health care needs to continue functioning even with all the added stress of the pandemic. This is not the time to play games with profit margins or covered services. I am glad to see that the legislature is taking a closer look at mitigating the additional financial burdens Connecticut residents are taking on to manage their health.

Hwang represents the 28th Senate District in the Connecticut General Assembly. Hwang is deputy minority Senate Leader and the ranking legislative leader on the Public Safety and Security Committee and Higher Education & Employment Committees and also serves as a member of the Transportation Committee.