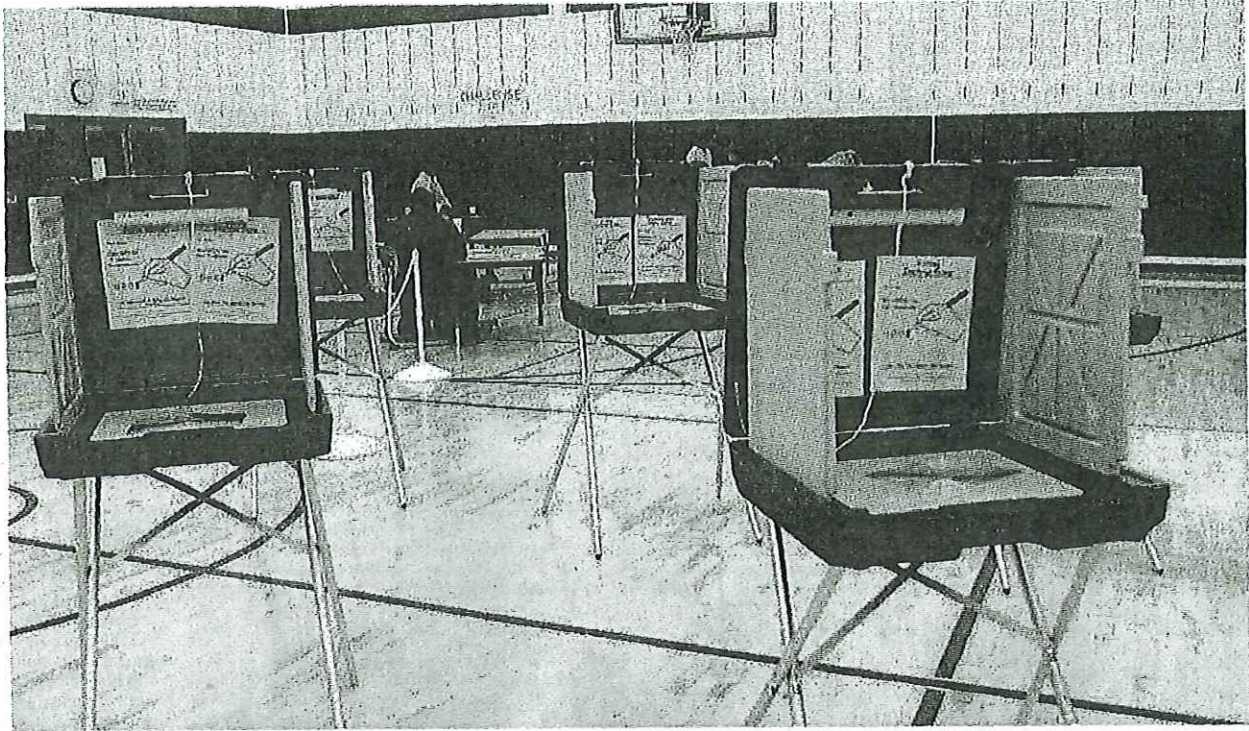


Hartford Courant, Sunday, Feb 4



FILE

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

By Erin Stewart

Another day, another year, another unfunded and confusing mandate from the state of Connecticut — in the infamous words of the late and great Yogi Berra, “It’s like déjà vu all over again.” Unfunded mandates from the state of Connecticut are no surprise to us as local elected leaders. In fact, we often anticipate them, we budget for the expected shortfalls, and plan accordingly — but the burdens placed on us to implement the state’s new early voting system, really take the cake. Unsurprisingly, Hartford has already messed this one up.

The “one size fits all” approach being espoused by our leaders under the golden dome (which prioritizes politics rather than practicality) will inevitably lead to significant additional costs to municipalities, staffing issues, voter confusion, and a further loss of faith in our electoral system. Connecticut had the opportunity to do this right, to set up a bipartisan taskforce comprised of stakeholders and election experts. Instead it was rushed for political expediency, approved along strict partisan lines and, in my opinion, has severely missed the mark.

Now, I don’t want to confuse people on where I stand: I, along with almost 70% of Connecticut voters, gladly cast my ballot in 2022 in support of early voting to expand access, ease, and hopefully increase voter participation. My problem is not with the concept, but rather with how our state politicians have chosen to implement it. Flawed implementation is the elephant in

the room that must be addressed and, as an outspoken public proponent of the measure, I see it as my duty to lend my voice to this ongoing discourse to help us fix the glaring problems and deficiencies before us.

First is the issue of funding. The simple reality is that municipalities are cash strapped, and the state has offered little-to-no support to facilitate the program they are forcing on our local Registrar Offices. The additional cost of running early voting will unsurprisingly vary from town-to-town and city-to-city, but here in New Britain the price tag is onerous and taxpayers will be the ones to inevitably foot the bill. Between the additional staff needed to facilitate the process, the rental of halls to execute early voting, and technology upgrades to those locations to make sure the elections run smoothly, the price tag for such an endeavor in my city alone is likely

to cost an additional \$80,000 to \$100,000.

The state’s response to these concerns? A uniform one-time \$10,500 grant allotment to all municipalities across Connecticut. That means the Registrars of Voters in Cornwall (a town with a population of 1,500 people) will get the same resources as New Britain (a city with a population around 75,000). The math simply doesn’t add up. If our state government truly believes that early voting is as essential to free and fair elections as they proclaim, they need to put their money (our money) where their mouths are.

The second glaring issue concerns staffing. Right now, many registrars across our state struggle to find enough poll workers to cover a normal Election Day. How can we possibly think that the pool has somehow widened enough to accommodate a potential 28 days of additional voting for some municipalities, mine included, at multiple precincts? Additional staffing issues arise with the complexities of regulations surrounding early voting as set forth in state statute.

The “pretzel logic” (more on that later) surrounding early voting will absolutely confuse many of our volunteer poll workers who are working under these new conditions for the first time creating complications and potential chaos at the polling locations. Don’t forget this added chaos comes in a year in which we are expected to see record voter turnout because of

the presidential election cycle. The haste to deliver on early voting by the legislature is a disservice to our election workers and voters alike, both of whom deserve the opportunity to facilitate and participate in an efficient and straightforward election process.

Now let’s talk about the “pretzel logic,” i.e. the statutes that govern the rules and regulations of early voting and how they will directly lead to voter confusion. There are too many to list so let’s just pick the top few to highlight. First and foremost, there is the lack of uniformity of timeframe: depending on the election or primary, your window ranges from 4 to 7 to 14 days to participate, voting hours are not the same day-to-day, and dates could be affected by Sundays and state/federal holidays.

Next up is the confusion around Same Day Registration, or SDR: non-voters wanting to participate in early voting will have the ability to register to vote using SDR but will not be allowed to vote the same day — they will be required, to return the following day or day after (depending on what time they register) to cast their ballot. Yes, that’s right, read that again and try to digest it.

Finally, there is no mandate for uniformity of early voting polling precincts between elections — leaving open the potential for a voter who participates in all three elections of 2024 (presidential primary, state primary and the

Recent studies show thinning makes forests more fire-prone — the fires burn hotter and spread faster.

Creating more airspace in any structure does not slow fire. It can feed it. Thinning severs a forest's interlocked links, destroys life at every level, welcomes wind, invites brittle, fire-prone weeds to annex, insects to invade, disease to enter.

We need to keep old-growth biospheres intact to accomplish our goal — to allow old-growth forests to function effectively as our carbon reservoir to slow climate change.

Lea Sloan, Old Saybrook
The writer is on the Old-Growth Forest Network Board

I am a student nurse attending Quinnipiac University. As I am doing my clinical education, I am realizing the unsafe situations that nurses are put in daily. Nurses are constantly being pulled in multiple directions and at times asked to care for more patients than they can handle.

It is a good day when there is one nurse to four patients; however, on a bad day, it could be up to eight. Inadequate staffing should not impact nurses, and hospitals need to address this issue. We need to bring attention to the unsafe nursing ratios, which put strain on the nurses and the patients, including patient outcomes. It is time to

Miranda Carpenter

Child care, housing issues are intertwined

In regard to the recent article [Jan. 16, Page 2, "Housing, child care rank among CT residents' top priorities for legislators. We're 'struggling'"], it is true. Connecticut is grappling with joint child care and housing crises, but these are not siloed. Recognizing the intersection between them and the compounding impact on the lives of parents, educators, providers, businesses, and especially our state's children, is essential to

earn poverty-level parents hemorrhage paychecks to afford providers allocated budgets toward services are leaving the waves, causing the close and wait list the center I lead, the largest financial burden. Low salaries and a housing crisis are educators homeless living in unsafe conditions.

At Friends Center we came up with a supplement salary free teacher housing teachers' largest expense burdening our students through higher tuition model would be successful.

Voting

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general election) having to cast a ballot at three different locations.

On top of all this, the individual rules and regulations currently on the books governing voting (absentee voting, Election Day SDR, in-person Election Day voting) are all different as well. The confusion and resulting resentment from voters will be immense. Connecticut risks confusing people right out of participating, and there is currently no money allocated at the state level or municipal level for public education on the complexities of early voting.

In conclusion, I think it's apparent we must do a better job and go back to the drawing board. My fear is simple: getting this wrong will further undermine people's faith and confidence in the electoral process. Elec-

tions are a sacred and fundamental component to a functioning democracy — people must have faith in the outcome. The current plan to implement early voting will undermine that overarching goal.

If we are to move perilously forward unchanged, the state of Connecticut should at least bear the burden of properly funding public education on the topic and alleviating the financial hardships this will place on municipalities. My final note is this; the rapid expansion of voting is something we should all be concerned with, whether you're a proponent or an opponent of it doesn't matter. The devil is in the details as we can see here. We need to have a good, long, bipartisan conversation about fixing early voting before we should ever talk about what comes next.

Erin Stewart (R) is the 40th mayor of the city of New Britain.

Rennie

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ally performed itself.

The ferocious reaction by students, some legislators and the public to the closing without a teach-out shook the bureaucrats responsible. On March 2, a DPH official directed others in the agency to "be as vague as possible" when talking about Stone.

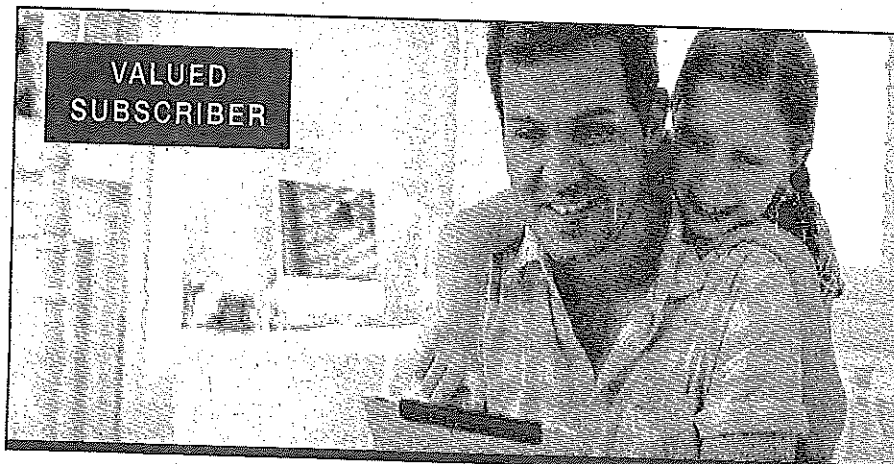
Meanwhile, the audit of student transcripts was not completed until five months after the school closed. It purported to have found a Niagara of serious omissions in Stone's record keeping of student attendance and other details. Auditors invalidated more than 75,000 hours of clinical training. The audit report ignited a new round of condemnation of Stone by Larson and Attorney General William Tong.

The audit was a devastating indictment of Stone — built on

sand.

On Nov. 17, and lawyer, James Healy, deposed the state's attorney in a deposition of DPH nursing investigators asked Smith, who took an oath, if there was any "regulation or soured integrity" that required a sheet at clinical locations was not. Any that times at clinical sites could not identify

On it went. Smith consulted with the attorney and OHE on the audit and not identify any audit required Stone to be at clinical locations agreed with Healy credits should not if an instructor's name known or it could be determined that instructor be "classified as unlicensed DPH," as the audit



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