

ARTICLE 28:

Remote Participation at Concord Annual and Special Town Meetings

Scott H. Gillis* moves:

That the Town Meeting authorize the Select Board to request a home rule petition from the General Court to allow remote participation at Concord Annual and Special Town Meetings with language substantially in the form the draft bill printed in the current Town Warrant.

* Co- Petitioner

“Make Voting More Accessible” (1)

“Our democracy is strongest when every voice is heard, which is why we strongly advocate for measures to make voting more accessible.” (1)

(1) The National LWV Website (Expanding Voter Access)

TOWN MEETING: The Purest Form of Democracy

Every registered voter has the right to vote

If and only if physically in the meeting room at
the time of the vote

Required in-person attendance is an obstacle for many voters

Our Disenfranchised Neighbors

Parents with children at home

Elderly voters

Unwell voters...and more

The result of required in-person attendance (Data from Town Clerk)
Average Participation Percent Past 10 Years

Peak Attendance: <7% (< 1,000 Voters)

Have Not Attended: >93% (> 12,500 Voters)

Remote participation is widely used in our modern world:

- Select Board Meetings, Boards and Committee Meetings and Education.
- Remote Jobs, Telemedicine, Remote Robotic Surgery, Banking & Contract Signing, Government and more.

Primary Benefits of remote participation:

More Inclusive by offering an alternative to in-person attendance

Allows “hybrid” meetings preserving in-person deliberation

Unintentionally, MA law suppresses participation
in open Annual and Special Town Meetings

Remote Participation Bills Submitted to the MA Legislature:

Wayland (Thousands of Voters – Open)

Lexington (about 200 Representatives)

Article 28: Remote Participation - Home Rule Petition

The Time is Now

- The Massachusetts legislative process allowing remote participation could take 2-5 years and require multiple petitions.
- If someday, Concord wants to use modern technology during Annual Town Meeting, now is the time to act.

ARTICLE 28: Remote Participation

The motion requests that our Select Board seek a bill named: “An Act authorizing remote participation at Annual and Special Town Meetings in the Town of Concord”

Four Sections:

1. Remote participation shall be allowed
2. The meeting shall be recorded and available for later viewing
3. All results shall be binding as if the meeting was in-person
4. Upon passage by the MA legislature; Our option to vote remotely

ARTICLE 28: Remote Participation

A yes vote does not endorse any remote voting system or philosophy.

Moderator's Town Meeting Study Committee picks technology options.

A yes vote gives us options; it does not require changing Town Meeting.

Voting “yes” on this Article does nothing more than.....

Authorize the Select Board to seek legislative permission allowing remote participation at Concord Annual and Special Town Meetings.

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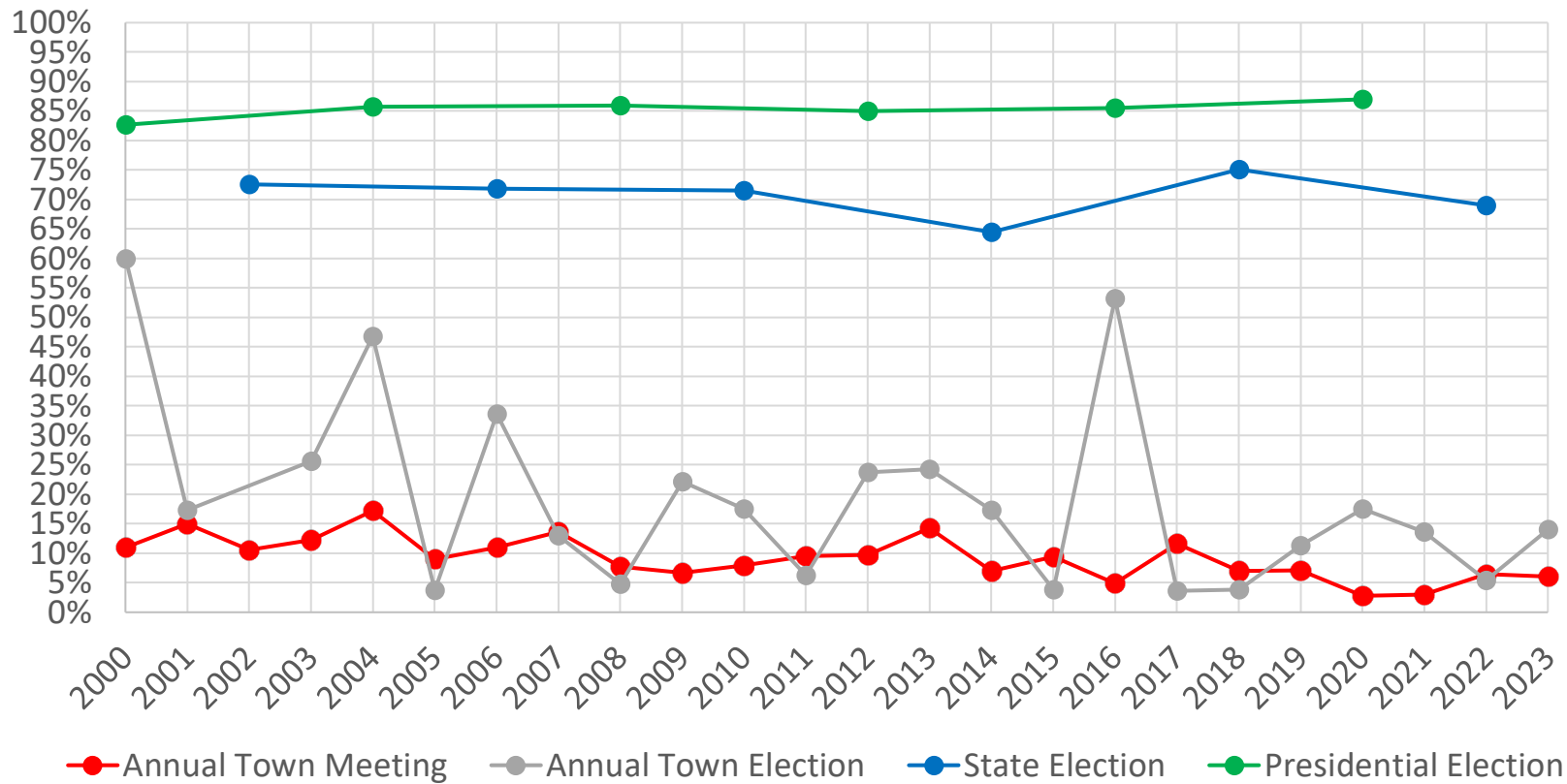
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Back-up Slides



Why don't we allow remote voting?

“Broad Consensus” that MA law prohibits remote participation.

No “Telepresence” Allowed!

“An Act authorizing remote participation at Annual and Special Town Meetings in the Town of Concord”

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding chapter 39 of the General Laws, or any general or special law or charter provision to the contrary, the Town of Concord may hold Annual and Special Town Meetings with voters located in a common, physical location, fully remote or partially remote, to be known as a hybrid town meeting.

ARTICLE 28: Remote Participation

“An Act authorizing remote participation at Annual and Special
Town Meetings in the Town of Concord”

SECTION 2. Any Annual or Special Town Meeting held remotely or in hybrid form in accordance with this act shall be recorded and the recording shall be made available for public viewing on the Town’s website, You Tube or any other site at the Town’s preference for no fewer than 30 days following the conclusion of the meeting. The recording shall also be a permanent record of the Town, subject to disclosure upon request.

“An Act authorizing remote participation at Annual and Special
Town Meetings in the Town of Concord”

SECTION 3. All actions taken at a remote or hybrid Annual or Special Town Meeting held in accordance with this act shall be ratified, validated and confirmed to the same extent as if the Annual or Special Town Meeting had been conducted entirely in person.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Thank You!

April 2024

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