

August 31, 2020

The Honorable Jim Justice  
Governor, State of West Virginia

The Honorable Mac Warner  
West Virginia Secretary of State

Dear Governor Justice and Secretary Warner,

The undersigned organizations are requesting that you act now to reinstate your statewide funding and mandate for the mailing of applications for absentee ballots to all registered voters in each of our counties.

A county by county decision on this issue cannot guarantee the benefit of an individual application to every registered voter regardless of where they live and their capacity to access your online portal.

Based on West Virginia's experience in the primary, it is likely that over half of our voters may vote in the general election via absentee ballot. Your online portal is an excellent tool for those voters who are able to use it. It appears that your procedures will also save steps for the county clerks who process these online applications.

Unfortunately, as you know, we have a significant digital divide in our state. A large proportion of our voters will not have the connectivity or devices that they need in order to use this online portal. Some, primarily those who are elderly, will not have the technological savvy to be able to use it. We also know that some voters who have the necessary technology are unable to use the portal due to errors and others are declining to use it for fear that their electronic signatures will not match up with their hand-written signatures that are on file with their county clerk.

We must not put additional barriers to the ability of these voters to participate fully in our upcoming general election. Many of them will be expecting to receive an application for an absentee ballot in the mail as they did during the primary election. They may hear from family or friends in neighboring counties who have received their application and not know that they have to apply on their own based on which county they live in.

The call has gone out from major voices in both parties to apply for, complete, and return our absentee ballot as early as possible.

Please move ahead quickly to institute statewide mailings of applications to all registered voters in order to give as much time as possible for the counties to get out the applications and facilitate the absentee voting process.

We are willing and ready to help with a public information campaign based on an official guidance from the Secretary of State's office. This campaign also needs to start now.

We are also asking the Governor to make clear to all voters that his mandate for face coverings inside of buildings will be enforced at all polling places, including in those places that are used for early voting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

WV Citizens for Clean Elections  
ACLU of WV  
League of Women Voters of West Virginia  
WV Poor People's Campaign  
NAACP, Charleston Branch  
National Association of Social Workers – WV  
Our Future WV  
West Virginians for Affordable Health Care  
WV Citizen Action Group  
WV FREE  
WV Rivers Coalition