



# LET AMERICA VOTE

April 9, 2020

The Honorable William Gardner  
New Hampshire Secretary of State  
State House, Room 204  
107 North Main Street  
Concord, N.H. 03301

Secretary Gardner,

This is an extraordinary time for our nation and the world. The COVID-19 pandemic poses challenges for public health, the safety and economic security of our families and communities, and our democracy. As you and state leaders continue to address this crisis, it's critical to take action now to ensure our upcoming elections are safe, secure and accessible to all eligible voters. We need to look no further than what happened this week in Wisconsin where voters were forced to choose between following guidance from health officials to stay home and avoid large gatherings or exercising their sacred right to vote. The result was chaos unworthy of the greatest democracy in the world.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis. If New Hampshire does not start planning for the November 2020 election now, free and fair elections in the Granite State are at risk due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were discouraged to hear that your office is opposed to no-excuse absentee voting, as it would be an important measure to make voting safe and accessible in New Hampshire. Let America Vote urges you to expand the definition of "disability" in New Hampshire's permissible excuses for voting absentee this November to include the COVID-19 pandemic.

No Granite Stater should be forced to choose between their health and their right to vote.

We can reduce the stress put on local officials on Election Day while ensuring every eligible voter can cast a ballot by implementing time-tested policies already in place around the country. The nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice suggests five key changes to ensure safe, fair, and secure elections this year<sup>1</sup>.

- **Universal Vote by Mail Option:** The safest way to conduct the 2020 primary and general elections is to allow voters to request absentee ballots and vote by mail. Implement no-excuse absentee voting by mail, that includes paid return postage, as well as secure ballot drop-off locations. Thirty-three states and Washington, D.C. currently offer no-excuse/absentee ballots, including five that conduct voting only by mail (Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah and Washington)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Brennan Center for Justice, "How to Protect the 2020 Elections from the Coronavirus" (March 16, 2020). Available online at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/how-protect-2020-vote-coronavirus>.

<sup>2</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, "Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options" (Updated: April 3, 2020). Available online at <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx>.



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- **Extended Early Voting:** Extend (or implement for those states without it) in-person early voting periods before Election Day to give voters more time to cast a ballot, while limiting crowds at specific polling locations to maintain social distance during this pandemic.
- **Polling Place Adjustments:** Maintain safe, clean, and secure in-person voting options for those without regular access to the post office, or those uncomfortable or unable to submit absentee ballots.
- **Voter Registration Adjustments:** The crisis could disrupt voter registration drives and other ways Americans sign up to cast their ballot. Implement online voter registration and/or ensure the system can handle a surge of registrants, increase staff capacity to address surge in voter interest, and add flexibility to registration guidelines.
- **Voter Education:** It's critical to alert voters to any changes in voting and voter registration practices through a robust public education campaign that also guards against misinformation.

On behalf of Let America Vote, End Citizens United, and our 4+ million members around the country and our nearly 30,000 members in New Hampshire, we unequivocally endorse implementing these reforms to ensure the integrity of the 2020 elections and our ability to confront any challenge to our democratic norms in future elections to come.

One person, one vote is the foundation of our democracy and it must be protected, but time is running out. It's critical you act now to begin putting new voting processes in place or updating existing ones to ensure they're ready in time for November. We urge you to use your election administration powers to make these reforms and then make a formal request to the federal government that you receive the funding you require.

Together, we can ensure our democracy and our communities come out of this crisis stronger than ever.

Thank you,

Tiffany Muller  
President, Let America Vote and End Citizens United