



LET AMERICA VOTE

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Ned Lamont
Office of Governor
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Governor Lamont,

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 agree with Secretary of State Denise Merrill's call for an executive order allowing Connecticut voters to vote absentee in the upcoming primary and general elections due to the COVID-19 public health crisis. In order to protect the health of voters and our democracy, we urge you to classify this pandemic as a permissible excuse for voting absentee both in your state's upcoming primary and general elections.

No Connecticut resident 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 year¹.

- **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)².
- **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

¹ 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>.

² 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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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 more than 53,500 members in Connecticut, 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 emergency 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