

Please enter this into the public record and distribute to all involved re voting concern during this pandemic

One of the most sacred rights and responsibilities we have as citizens is our right to vote. As a core element of our democracy, it needs to be protected, especially in a time of crisis and upheaval.

I respect our call for social distancing and staying at home and support our legislators creativity in finding ways to vote remotely to protect their health, while still protecting the integrity of their voting process. Your work representing us is even more urgent during this time and we appreciate that you are still “on the job”!

We the People should be afforded these same protections. We need a way to vote remotely to protect our right to have our voices counted, while simultaneously staying healthy. And just as you would not want to have just some legislators votes counted on important legislation, we need to be diligent about providing ways to insure that EVERY eligible Minnesotan who wants to vote has ease in doing so.

Sending every registered voter a ballot by mail, having ballots and/or instructions in multiple languages and resolving issues with folks who get mail by PO Box would be a great first step. People will need to be educated about how vote by mail works, know when to start looking for their ballot and understand the procedures in voting and returning their ballot. Many people have been voting by mail already, but for some this will be a new process.

As we have seen, sometimes things can change dramatically during the course of an election so I strongly recommend that ballots need to be postmarked on or before election day, affording at home voters the same time period to weigh these important decisions as those who go to the polls. Though media, pundits and parties want the immediate gratification of results as soon as polls close, the most important consideration on election day should be We the Voters.

As an election judge, I can understand the need to close some polling places on election day during a pandemic as the pool of healthy, available judges may be more limited. Though not ideal, precautions can be taken to limit disenfranchising voters by analyzing communities and setting up polling places in ways that keep we the voters at the center of decisions, with input and transparency by including community members of both parties in this decision making process. We oversee issues at polling places on election day in a bipartisan manner for fairness and transparency, the same should be done in preparing for these polls.

I appreciate the work that you are doing on our behalf to insure both the security and accessibility of voting for all eligible Minnesotans. This is incredibly time sensitive as there is much work to do in this unprecedented time. We will be watching closely as these decisions are made as this is at the very heart of how our republic functions.

Sincerely,
Caren Gallagher
Eagan