

**From The Office of
West Virginia Secretary of State
Mac Warner**

For Immediate Release: March 26, 2020

Special Provisions Made for May 12th Primary Election;

Mail-In Absentee Ballot 'Application' to be Sent to Every Registered Voter in WV

Charleston, W. Va. – Secretary of State Mac Warner announced today that he has issued guidance and a funding opportunity to assist county clerks with mailing an absentee ballot application to every registered voter in West Virginia. Returning the absentee ballot application is the first step to receiving the official ballot via mail. During the State of Emergency, every registered WV voter is eligible to vote an absentee-by-mail ballot in the May 12 Primary Election.

There are three simple steps for voting an absentee-by-mail ballot: (1) the voter submits an absentee ballot application to their county clerk; (2) once approved, the county clerk will mail a postage prepaid absentee ballot with instructions and materials to the voter; and (3) the voter marks the absentee ballot according to the instructions and places it in the mail to be postmarked by Election Day, May 12, 2020.

The goal of this uniform, statewide mailing is to ensure every eligible voter has an opportunity to vote while protecting the health of voters, county clerks' staff members, election workers, and the general public, while maximizing participation in the May 12 Primary Election. Secretary Warner's Office will reimburse the cost of the mailings to county clerks in an expedited fashion to reduce the increased financial burden on county budgets.

"The Governor, Attorney General, county clerks and I have zealously worked together within state law to balance health concerns with the ease of voting," Warner said. "We have determined that the absentee voting process is the safest method. By sending an absentee application to all registered voters, it encourages voters to participate in the election in the safest manner possible without having to leave their house. Your ballot box is as close as your mailbox."

Warner said that voters can expect to receive an absentee ballot application sometime during the week of April 6. Voters who have already requested or submitted an absentee application to their county clerk will be excluded from the mailing to prevent confusion and duplication. However, there may be overlap in requests and mailings by clerks due to natural postal delays, so any voter who receives more than one absentee application may disregard additional application mailings.

Important deadlines apply to the absentee ballot application and voting process, which are different than in-person voting. Those key deadlines are:

- Absentee ballot applications must be received by the county clerk on, or before, May 6, 2020
- Absentee ballots must be postmarked by Election Day, May 12, 2020

Other key dates to remember include the last day to register to vote for the Primary Election, April 21; early in-person voting from April 29 to May 9; and Election Day, May 12.

The Secretary of State and county clerks recommend that voters return their applications as soon as possible. This will help county clerks and their staff process the applications and place absentee ballots in the mail in a timely manner. When voters receive their absentee ballot, it is also recommended that they return

the ballot in a reasonable time to help facilitate the administration of the election and speed up the tabulation process after the election.

The Secretary of State's Office established a website, GoVoteWV.com, to provide information and educate voters on the election process, including absentee voting, updated registration/polling place locations, poll worker opportunities, and auxiliary positions. With 1,723 polling locations throughout the state, it takes more than 9,000 election day workers and county employees to manage a statewide election. New poll workers and auxiliary staff will be needed to administer this election, so watch for future announcements about these opportunities.

Warner reminds West Virginians that there are only two trusted sources for election information – the WV Secretary of State's Office and your county clerk. Voters with questions or concerns can contact the Secretary of State's Office at 304-558-6000 or by sending a message to Elections@wvsos.gov. To find your county clerk's contact information, visit the directory at GoVoteWV.com.

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