



STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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STATE BUDGET COMMITTEE

July 20, 2020

Governor Holcomb:

In March, the Indiana Election Commission wisely expanded absentee voting opportunities to all Hoosiers with the support of Secretary of State Lawson and yourself. Expanded vote-by-mail eligibility for the primary election was an important step in the right direction for voting access. I urge you to take similar action now. All indications point to the COVID-19 pandemic being a major health concern this fall. Thus, **a no-excuse vote-by-mail option must be implemented for the 2020 General Election.**

Not only does it allow many vulnerable Hoosiers to avoid the need to risk their health, but it also serves the overwhelming majority of citizens who support the safe, secure and efficient option of voting by mail. Over 500,000 Hoosiers requested an absentee ballot for the primary. More importantly, absolutely no one should have to decide between their health and their right to vote.

For the primary, Indiana counties faced substantial increases in the number of people requesting an absentee ballot, and many struggled to fulfill voter requests. This caused many of our fellow Hoosiers to become disenfranchised as their ballots arrived well after the noon Election Day deadline. Therefore, I also request that the noon Election Day deadline for absentee ballots be extended. I understand that approximately 1,500 Marion County ballots and more than 500 Hamilton County ballots were rejected due to this onerous deadline during the primary. This was surely the case for hundreds if not thousands more Hoosiers across the state. This disenfranchisement is unacceptable. **Counties should be instructed to count all ballots if they are postmarked by Election Day and received within a week of Election Day.** Given that Indiana takes 10 days to certify election results, this change will allow for ballots to be counted and meet that existing certification deadline. Finally, to help reduce the number of ballots received after election day, **all counties should provide for ballot drop boxes at secure sites in the community.**

I hope you will make these three common sense changes as soon as possible and work with Secretary of State Lawson to then **allocate available federal funds to ensure these changes can be implemented** effectively so that every Hoosier can vote safely, efficiently and securely.

A world enduring the COVID-19 pandemic will require thoughtful, forward-thinking leadership and flexibility. These three common sense changes plus sufficient funding to implement them, will go a long way towards ensuring that voters will be able to fully exercise their right as citizens in the 2020 General Election. I strongly encourage you to take this opportunity to ensure that Hoosiers are not disenfranchised through no fault of their own.

Respectfully,

Carey Hamilton
State Representative
House District 87