



March 22, 2020

The Honorable John Carney
820 French St. 12th floor
Wilmington, De 19801

Dear Governor Carney:

We are writing in reference to the Presidential Primary for our state, scheduled for April 28. Given the coronavirus pandemic and the federal and state restrictions, it is imperative that Delaware make it easier for voters and poll workers to maintain their health by limiting the need to cast an in-person ballot.

Since Delaware does not have no-excuse absentee voting or vote by mail, our best option is using the existing absentee balloting process. There are several issues with this process as it pertains to the coronavirus pandemic that the League of Women Voters of Delaware would like addressed.

First, the current absentee ballot has a limited list of reasons that do not apply to self-isolation and quarantining of those that may not be truly sick. Allowing the definition of the "I am sick, or temporarily, or physically disabled" reason on the absentee ballot request to include response to a pandemic would be one solution. Another would be to allow the "incarceration" choice to include home confinement based on a state or federal response to pandemic.

Secondly, we understand that a rush of absentee ballots may cause difficulty for the Elections Commission personnel, if the ballots are counted on or after Election Day. We suggest they be validated and counted on receipt, although not reported until Election Day.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware would also recommend advertising the availability of absentee ballots and the rules for voting in this manner. It is important to ensure that the most vulnerable can have access to voting.

Finally, we need to prepare for voting in the September state primary and the November general election. Implementing a no-excuse absentee or vote by mail process may be ways to address voting from home rather than going to the polls. We need to start thinking about this sooner rather than later.

The people want to vote. However, they do not want to put themselves or others at risk. They want to do it legally, and it is difficult to do so, given the barriers to voting in our state at the present time.

These are trying times for everyone. We want to protect the health and safety of Delawareans while simultaneously upholding the rights of our voters.

Sincerely,

Sue Claire Harper, LWVDE Co-President.
Carol Jones, LWVDE Co-President

CC: Anthony Albence, Election Commissioner; General Assembly Members, League of Women Voters of Delaware members