



Ward 5 Democrats

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March 30, 2020

Michael Bennett, Chairman
DC Board of Elections
1015 Half St. SE, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20003

Re: Request Better Voting Options for seniors during June 2020 Primary

Dear Chairman Bennett,

The Ward 5 Democrats write to you in response to the city's decision to cut back in-person primary voting and encourage mail-in ballots amid COVID-19. First, we would like to state that we commend this swift and decisive stance that provides public safety to the residents of the District of Columbia, while simultaneously ensuring that democracy is preserved in our city. However, we are concerned that seniors in Ward 5 and all throughout DC will not be able to vote in their strong and consistent numbers due to the voting options put in place, because of COVID-19. There are 70 senior apartment developments in DC which comprise 7,303 senior housing units throughout the city. Of the more than 700,000 residents in DC, one out of ten are over 62 years of age. Additionally, even with more seniors using the internet, many will not have access to request a mail-in ballot through a computer and will need much guidance in calling or faxing the city. Moreover, due to COVID-19 all 70 senior buildings are currently on lockdown, which means that seniors are confined to their apartments and prohibited from gathering in their social rooms. Visitors and family members cannot come by, which could also lead to depression and other mental health issues. We must ensure and encourage voter participation for our seniors, because they are the most reliable and stable voters in the District of Columbia and the country. Thus, we have serious recommendations to provide sufficient voting options for our seniors while ensuring social distancing and preserving public health. They are as follows:

- 1) All seniors over 62 years of age should automatically receive a mail-in ballot. This number is between 25,000-35,000 residents in the District of Columbia.
- 2) There should be a separate call-in line for seniors to request a mail-in ballot. This would increase efficiency during the call-in process, because other lines could be focused on other residents in DC, while also encouraging senior voter participation. This would be called the Senior Hotline.
- 3) Posters should be provided at each senior building outlining the new changes as well as a Senior Hotline Number.
- 4) Seniors should be allowed to vote on Election Day during specified times similar to the procedures put in place at grocery stores. This would promote public health for all DC residents.
- 5) There should be a certain amount of sites dedicated solely to seniors voting. Additionally, there should be adequate chairs at these designated sites, so seniors do not stand in line while waiting to vote inside.

Therefore, the benefit and advantage of having more voting options for our seniors are apparent for reasons stated above. The District of Columbia and all throughout the nation owes so much to our seniors. Historically, seniors from the 70 senior buildings in DC are transported to 441 Judiciary Square, where special accommodations are arranged for them to vote as well as early voting in the Ward Elections, Primary Day, and the General Election. Thus, we urge all stakeholders to support this critical initiative that will strengthen our democracy and ensure our seniors have the sufficient opportunity to vote in the June 2020 Primary and beyond.

Best Regards,

Gordon-Andrew Lee Fletcher, Esq.

Gordon-Andrew Lee Fletcher, Esq.

Ward Five Democrats, Chairman

Bob King

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Ward Five Democrats, Seniors' Chair