



ELECTION COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK 2019-2020 DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

The Federal Government needs to fund elections to protect voters this fall.

The Covid-19 crisis has had a detrimental effect on just about every aspect of our society. Its insidious and prevalent nature has changed how we interact with each other in every facet of life. This is especially true in our most basic tenant of our Democracy, the right to vote. Election Boards, inspectors, campaigns, are trying to ensure we can still exercise the franchise while providing a safe environment for voters and poll workers. The voice from Boards of Elections throughout New York State and the country is clear, we need help and financial support.

The current crisis has had unique and unforeseen costs to our current operations. The public's rightful demand for safe and accessible absentee voting does not come without a cost. Participation in absentee voting has increased dramatically for the June primary. For example, Onondaga County could expect an average of 3 -5k absentee ballots and for the June primary we received over 24k absentee ballots. There is no reason to believe the fall general election won't see a similar increase demand, however instead of 26k absentees we could see well over 100k absentees.

This comes with an increase costs for the boards. Increases in printing, postage, are a given, however, providing funds to allow for voters to participate in this process with prepaid postage for ballots and even applications for absentees will drive up the cost further. In addition, the purchase of PPE equipment and need for extra personnel to sanitize polling places and monitoring social distancing has also strained our budgets. Finally there needs to be a robust voter outreach effort to educate the public who may be voting by absentee for the first time and risk disenfranchisement if not ballots are not properly returned.

The \$400 million Congress passed in the CARES Act was barely adequate to cover increased costs during our recent primaries and in many areas of the country fell well short. As we face a Presidential election that is predicted to break all turnout records in November, we need immediate and robust funding to serve voters while keeping them safe. The \$3.6 billion in election spending in the HEROES Act would go a long way to helping local boards meet this challenging moment. Congress, and specifically the United States Senate, must meet this moment by providing the resources we need to serve the citizens of our great nation. Failing to do so is putting the unique experiment of our American Democracy at risk not just now, but perhaps permanently.

Finally, elections do not operate in a vacuum. Most Election Boards are hosted and funded by county and city governments. COVID-19 has had a disastrous effect on their budgets as falling sales tax revenue, as well large amounts of unemployment, have emptied their coffers. Funding for state and local governments is just as large of a priority. Election Boards cannot operate effectively if the government structure around them is in constant turmoil. Only the Federal government has the

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resources and legal authorities to be able to provide this vital assistance. It should be done as soon as possible, and be as generous as possible, to allow our country the resources needed to live with and eventually defeat this epidemic.

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