

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2020

Chairman Roy Blunt
U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration
305 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Ron Johnson
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Chairman Lindsey Graham
U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Blunt, Johnson, and Graham:

We write to request that you, Chairmen of the Senate Committees with jurisdiction over federal elections and election related issues, hold hearings on how Congress can work to ensure every eligible American can safely and easily exercise their right to vote during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to combat the spread of misinformation related to elections.

Nobody should have to choose between their health and their right to vote, and Americans deserve accurate information about our democracy. Primary voters across Georgia and Wisconsin can attest to the fact that failure to enact reforms and provide assistance to states will result in widespread chaos, the disenfranchisement of voters, and even voters and election workers becoming sick.¹

Election officials across the country have expressed concern that this pandemic is affecting their ability to administer safe elections. In order to keep voters safe, Republican and Democratic officials are making changes to election processes.

¹Astead W. Herndon and Stephanie Saul, *Major Problems with Voting in Atlanta as 5 States Hold Primaries*, June 9, 2020) <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/us/politics/georgia-primary-voting-atlanta.html>
David Wahlberg, *67 got COVID-19 After Visiting Polls in State's April 7 Election*, Wisconsin State Journal (May 8, 2020) https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/health-med-fit/67-got-covid-19-after-visiting-polls-in-states-april-7-election-but-tie-to/article_49a42a7e-45d8-50cc-bd76-3a583842de39.html

Reports indicate that nearly 30 states have changed their election practices for this year's primaries or the general election in response to the pandemic and officials in sixteen states have postponed presidential primary elections or transitioned to predominantly voting by mail.²

Republican and Democratic governors and secretaries of state have expanded voting by mail during the pandemic. In addition to the five states that already hold their elections by mail, three states have held their presidential primary by mail after sending mail-in ballots to all registered voters, and one state held its primary by sending mail-in ballot applications to all registered voters. Five other states will be sending registered voters mail-in ballots for their next election, with an additional eleven states sending mail-in ballot applications. These changes will affect how approximately 87 million registered voters will cast their ballot this year—including more than 40 million people who now have the temporary right to cast an absentee ballot.

At the same time, with the changes in primary dates, election rules and practices, and the uncertainty of current rules in practices in many states, experts have warned about the real threat that misinformation and disinformation pose for our elections.³ It is vital that voters have accurate information on how to cast their ballots and that we put the full weight of the federal government behind combating misinformation and disinformation that intimidates and disenfranchises voters.

Despite bipartisan support for protecting voters during the pandemic, the White House has begun to attack voting by mail, alleging that it leads to increased voter fraud. There is no evidence substantiating these claims, and even the Commission the President assembled to find and prosecute voter fraud was disbanded after it did not find any substantive evidence. False claims regarding voting practices are damaging to the integrity of our democracy and so it is imperative that Congress hold hearings regarding how to protect the right to vote from COVID-19 and to provide facts regarding voting by mail.

With only 146 days until the general election, it is vital we act now to protect our elections from the threat of COVID-19. Americans are facing unprecedented disruptions to their daily lives, and we need to make sure that in the midst of this pandemic they do not lose their ability to vote. As Congress works to protect the health and wellbeing of the American people, it must also work to protect the safety and sanctity of our democracy.

² Nick Corasaniti and Stephanie Saul, *16 States Have Postponed Primaries During the Pandemic*, New York Times (May 27, 2020) <https://www.nytimes.com/article/2020-campaign-primary-calendar-coronavirus.html>

Elise Viebeck, *The Pandemic has Already Altered How Tens of Millions of American Can Cast Their Ballots This Year*, The Washington Post, (May 23, 2020) https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-pandemic-has-already-altered-how-tens-of-millions-of-americans-can-cast-their-ballots-this-year/2020/05/23/0e3c3bf8-9532-11ea-91d7-cf4423d47683_story.html

³ Eric Tucker and Amanda Seitz, *Vote-by-mail Debate Raises Fears of Election Disinformation*, AP News, (May 5, 2020) <https://apnews.com/ee8dd4051a53b5e7471c8a6a2ca1b8f3>

Spencer P. Boyer, *Here We Go Again: Russia Gears Up to Interfere in 2020 Election with Coronavirus Disinformation*, Foreign Policy (April 30, 2020) <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/30/2020-election-interference-russian-coronavirus-disinformation/>

Ciara Torres- Spelliscy, *A Pandemic, An Election, and a Census*, The Brennan Center, (March 20, 2020) <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/pandemic-election-and-census>

This is not a partisan issue – this is an American issue. The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy – a right that generations of Americans before us have fought to secure, and a right that we must protect. We respectfully urge you to immediately convene experts to testify on how we can improve the safety and administration of elections and combat election related misinformation.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator