



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY OFFICERS

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April 15, 2020

Rep. Michael Nelson  
Chair, State Government Finance Division  
Minnesota House of Representatives

Dear Chair Nelson and Members:

As county elections administrators across the state prepare for the 2020 general election cycle at an unprecedented time in our nation's history, the Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO) supports legislation to provide emergency framework around how to deliver the high quality of elections that Minnesota voters expect and deserve as well as supports authorizing the Minnesota Secretary of State access to the funds contained in Minnesota's HAVA account.

A strong portion of statewide polling places are located in facilities that may not be available if the pandemic is still limiting establishments; and a significant number of election judges statewide have expressed concerns about potential exposure to COVID-19 or fall into an at-risk category. Additionally, social distancing guidelines, if still in effect, will be very difficult to maintain in many of the polling places across the state; and voters themselves may feel some concerns about their own personal safety impacting their accessibility to a safe balloting option.

Minnesota has vote by mail statutes in place and expanding this program to all voters regardless of the size or location of their home municipality is the best way to ensure the successful administration of the election and affords equal opportunities and protections to all voters. In addition to developing mail ballot processes statewide, we would encourage the consideration of establishing vote centers and drop boxes to assist voters in securing access to a ballot.

Current law allows ballots to be processed and direct balloting procedures to begin 7 days before Election Day. Even without the COVID-19 concerns, MACO strongly encourages increasing that window to allow a longer processing time for ballots to be counted. By having at least 20 days prior to, and 7 days after the election to process all ballots received by Election Day, election administrators will be better equipped to handle the volume of mail ballots statewide.

MACO urges timely action in order to mitigate voter confusion and provide consistent practices for the August state primary and November general election.

Sincerely yours,

*Deborah A. Erickson*

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Chair, MACO Elections Committee