

J Tong <tong8jw@gmail.com> 6:19 AM (April 8, 2020)

to rep.raymond.dehn, rep.jim.nash, amanda.rudolph, rep.kristin.bahner, rep.connie.bernardy, rep.laurie.halverson, rep.alice.mann, rep.anne.neu, rep.tim.odriscoll

Please include the following as formal testimony for the Subcommittee on Elections hearing scheduled for April 8, 2020, which will consider the Secretary of State's proposed bill for plans to expand mail balloting in preparation for the 2020 elections during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Voters should not have to risk their lives and the lives of their families in order to exercise their right to vote. Minnesota already has no-excuse early voting and a system for smaller communities to vote by mail, so voting by mail is not new in Minnesota and has proven to be secure and effective. It simply makes sense that when public health demands social distancing that we use proven processes like mail balloting to ensure our elections can go forward safely and without interruption. And once we are past this current public emergency voting by mail is still the easiest way for many people to vote and I would hope we could keep it in place going forward. Since there is a relatively short time to get these changes implemented I hope that the Secretary of State's Office will consider changing the deadline for receiving the vote by mail to the "postmarked" date instead of the election day.

I understand that voting by mail may not be the most effective solution for some Minnesotans, such as those without traditional street addresses or who use PO boxes. I would urge that polling places still be open for those who need them and that guidance be provided to local jurisdictions to ensure that any changes to polling places is done in a way that does not negatively impact Minnesota voters' access to exercise their right to vote.

I also hope that the legislature can avoid partisan politics and make these updates with an eye toward maintaining Minnesota's voter-friendly processes and high voter turnout rates. We are rightfully proud of this reputation and should be a leader in securing access to the ballot. Legislators were given protections during this public health emergency and voters deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jennifer Tong

St. Paul