

April 7, 2020

To: Minnesota Legislature Subcommittee on Elections

RE: Expand Mail in Voting - COVID-19 Contingency Plan.

The need for all mail voting in the coming elections, in August and November of this year, is clear as we continue to abide by the Governor's stay at home order, and as he told us today that the full toll of this epidemic in MN is still ahead of us.

Public health experts have repeatedly explained that until there is a very high level of immunity to this virus in the population, which likely will await the fielding of an effective vaccine in a year or more, the likelihood of cyclic outbreaks and lockdowns is all but assured. Therefore, to protect our elections, we must assure that MN voters do not have to choose between their health and voting. This means that mail voting must be promoted for all voters and made as simple as possible. This what the proposed bill supported by the Secretary of State's Office is working towards.

The logistics of putting such a system in place are less daunting than it may at first seem, though it will be a job to be sure. There is already a system in place, which has been put in law by the legislature and that enables more than 1000 precincts (about 100,000 voters) in small communities, to vote by mail. That system includes proper safeguards for those communities, and these should be generalized as the system widens to the whole state.

Polling places are still an option to accommodate voters who have recently moved or have other obstacles to the home voting option. These could include voters in areas without clear street addresses for mailing (such as reservations), with low literacy or English proficiency, and in other mail-challenging situations. Local jurisdictions, with appropriate SOS guidance, can see to appropriate protections for local voting needs for specific groups.

Thank you in advance for your serious consideration of the new and urgently needed law that will assure that MN maintains its reputation as a voter friendly state with very high voting turnouts. This should not be a partisan issue since it impacts our cherished right to vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lyn Burton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lyn" being more prominent than the last name "Burton".

Lyn Burton

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