




# Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Governor  
The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President, Maryland State Senate  
The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the House, Maryland House of Delegates  
J.B. Jennings, Senate Minority Leader  
Steve Hershey, Senate Minority Whip  
Nicholaus Kipke, House Minority Leader  
Kathy Szeliga, House Minority Whip  
Linda Lamone, Esq., Administrator, Maryland State Board of Elections  
Michael Cogan, Chairman, Maryland State Board of Elections

**From:** David Garreis, President   
Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO)

**Date:** June 26, 2020

**Re:** 2020 Presidential General Election

The members of MAEO - the professional election administrators in the State - write to urge that the 2020 Presidential General Election be conducted primarily by mail, with more in-person vote centers available than in the Primary Election. This is critical for the local boards of elections (LBEs) to be able to successfully facilitate the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election. Since the primary election was conducted by mail, it is the type of election we are best prepared to conduct given the current circumstances of COVID-19. While we acknowledge that there were some challenges with the implementation of the primarily Vote-By-Mail June 2, 2020 Primary Election, valuable lessons have been learned and there is adequate time to remedy those issues before the General Election.

The local election directors are in agreement that we are past the point of having sufficient time to prepare for a “normal” in-person election. MAEO is therefore strongly in favor of a “hybrid vote-by-mail election with extended in-person vote centers.”

One concern is the availability of adequate polling places. Many of our polling places are not prepared to host an election during a pandemic. Due to COVID-19, some polling places will not be available to be utilized, as they are in senior living centers which have not been opened for visitation and have advised some local election administrators of this issue. Most polling places are in schools, and it is unknown at this time whether they will agree to allow for such a large number of in-person voters in one location. Some counties cannot use current polling places because of the concern that the size of polling rooms are so small that they could not fully staff them with election judges due to social distancing guidelines. With this being the case, there is an insufficient amount of time to select new polling places, a limited number of acceptable buildings/spaces to consider, and not enough time to notify voters of these likely changes.

Safety equipment, including personal protective equipment is another concern. We have no guarantee that plexi-glass screens, sanitizing stations, and personal protective equipment (PPE) would be available in the extraordinary quantities needed, and if it is available at all, it will potentially be left to the counties to fully fund. An increased amount would need to be purchased

to protect voters and election workers in all polling places. This is not included in the LBE FY21 budgets. It would also be expected that the election workers manage set-up of the plexi-glass screens and sanitizing stations. Since plexi-glass screens are not a part of the normal transportation of voting equipment, we also foresee an increase in the cost of transportation.

The greatest concern for local election officials is that the Presidential General Election will be set up to fail due to an insufficient number of viable election judges who are willing to manage the enormous task of working during a pandemic with a lack of resources and personnel for us to properly train them in the smaller class sizes necessary for adequate social distancing. One need only look at the headlines from other states that did not follow Maryland's example of sending a ballot to every voter for their primary elections to see the consequences of insufficient, inadequately trained election judges and last-minute precinct consolidations. In order to sufficiently prepare the election judges, some LBEs would need to begin election judge training in early July to have 100-300 classes in larger jurisdictions so that social distancing guidelines can be followed. LBEs do not have enough staff to manage these training sessions when required to do other regular tasks. Many offices do not have sufficient space to conduct training with proper social distancing.

In order to have proper organization and sufficient resources for the election, we request the following:

1. All registrants who are active, pending and inactive voters in the State's voter registration system should be sent a postcard by the State Board of Elections (SBE) no later than July 31. This will be the notification that there will be a vote-by-mail option for the voter. For active and pending voters, this will be a non-forwardable piece of mail, so that the LBEs can review the undeliverable addresses well in advance of the election. It should be noted that if the voter has not updated an address with the postal service or the board of elections, their mail will not arrive to them successfully. For inactive voters, a forwardable piece of mail will be sent notifying the voter that they are not going to be sent a ballot to the address that the LBE has on file.
2. Since this would be a hybrid election, vote-by-mail applications should NOT be sent to every registered voter. This causes added confusion and the LBEs do not have enough personnel to manage processing all of the requests, in addition to receiving ballots. This process would jeopardize the entire process, as the local boards would not have the resources to keep up with the demand and local boards do not have enough money in their budgets to hire additional staff.
3. In-person voting should be available at each jurisdiction's normal number of early voting locations beginning Thursday, October 29 through Election Day, Tuesday, November 3 from 7:00am - 8:00pm each day. Voters should be notified of these locations in an LBE customized insert that is mailed with the vote-by-mail ballot.
4. Drop boxes should be made available at locations selected by each LBE which will include, but not be limited to, each early voting center and the LBE office. Voters should be notified of these locations in an LBE customized insert that is mailed with the vote-by-mail ballot. Drop boxes should be available at all locations from October 6, 2020 through November 3, 2020. Pick-up should be authorized for once or twice per day.

5. The deadline for address changes to a voter's record should be moved to Tuesday, October 20, 2020. It should not be moved any closer than fourteen (14) days to the election. Since there is same day registration, voters can update their address or register to vote during in-person voting. Address changes that happen closer to election day cause voters to receive multiple ballots to multiple addresses leading to confusion and misunderstandings of the electoral process.
6. Ballots must be sent from a vendor that is accurately able to account for the ballots and see that there is a timely delivery. All voter ballots must be sent to meet the 45-day overseas ballot deadline - September 19 - to provide enough time for the postal service and the local boards of elections to process the ballots when they return as voted.
7. The envelope that the voter uses to mail the ballot back should remain the same for this election-cycle. Some voters voiced a concern about their signature being visible for people to see, but there were other ways the voter could sign the oath and return it to the LBEs.
8. Precinct-level results must be managed at the State level when preparing the ballots and it should not be expected that the LBE will be able to sort thousands of ballots by ballot style upon return. LBEs do not have enough space or staff to manage such a task.
9. LBEs must be allowed to begin canvassing ballots as soon as they begin receiving voted ballots, which could be as early as September 20, 2020. All results will be embargoed until Election Night, but it is critical that the LBEs can manage their received ballots on a daily basis to maximize election results totals on Election Night.
10. Voter outreach must be expanded to ensure that voters in every jurisdiction in the state receive the necessary elections related-information. In addition, the outreach campaign must begin no later than Friday, August 21, 2020.

All election administrators at the LBEs work tirelessly to make sure that everyone's vote is counted. We are the foundation of democracy and it is critical that we ensure the trust of Maryland's citizens in our voting process. All stakeholders of the electoral process must allow us - the LBE election administrators - to have a voice in determining how the election will be managed in this unprecedented time. The election officials in the State of Maryland need adequate time to implement policies, processes and procedures for the November 3, 2020 election. We have provided what we consider to be our roadmap to success, and we urge all involved parties to make all decisions by July 10, 2020 so that the LBE's can facilitate a fair and ethical election.

cc: County Executives  
County Commissioners  
Mayor, Baltimore City  
Michael Sanderson, Executive Director, Maryland Association of Counties