



CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY



NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF
ELECTION OFFICIALS

April 1, 2020

Honorable Phil Murphy, Governor
State of New Jersey
225 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy,

Please accept our sincere thanks for your leadership, communication and daily efforts to help New Jersey residents protect themselves and their families in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting our world, nation and state. We write to you today representing the Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey (including our state's County Clerks) along with the New Jersey Association of Election Officials (Superintendents and Boards of Election from all 21 counties), jointly seeking to partner with you so that we may better serve New Jersey voters during this time of crisis.

As "essential election" personnel, we and our limited staff are diligently preparing for future elections, and developing safeguards for election officials and the public we serve. We respectfully ask for your consideration in offering a determination on New Jersey's 2020 Primary Election in light of our current state of emergency. In deference to the duties and obligations you have, we have assembled the suggestions of Elections Administrators, who are committed to working together with this administration to ensure we put forth safe and successful Elections for everyone involved. Thus, we offer the following options along with a date we view as necessary in order to implement:

1. Continue as scheduled with votes cast at the polling sites throughout the state **No Action Required**
2. Implement a hybrid election featuring centrally located Voting Centers for those uncomfortable or unable to Vote by Mail, along with an expanded Vote by Mail program. **Executive Order Requested by April 3, 2020**
3. Implement an All Vote By Mail Statewide Primary. **Executive Order Requested by April 3, 2020**
4. Postpone the June Primary until later in the summer (late June or July), revisiting the aforementioned options as new COVID-19 data becomes available. **Executive Order Requested by April 3, 2020**

The first item noted above is what is anticipated unless otherwise revised by Executive Order, and we know you believe that it is also unadvisable given your repeated reminders to "flatten the curve." In fact, we send this letter knowing it is highly likely you are strongly considering the remaining options, and urge a decision sooner rather than later so that we may plan and prepare accordingly.

Should a large number of voters prefer the machine process in a Hybrid Election, turnout in Voting Centers are likely to challenge COVID-19 recommendations. Additionally, Voting Centers would carry the burden of an expanded ballot in order to encompass local and county committee races. This expansion is not possible on

some voting machines. As such, we submit that implementing a June 2nd Hybrid Election is not practical and ill-advised given current virus data.

The third option of declaring the June 2nd Primary Election an All Vote-By-Mail election is certainly an option worthy of discussion. While still two months out from the June Primary, cutoff dates to order tabulating equipment in lieu of supply quantities, as well as the ability to print several million ballots statewide remain of great concern. Legal notices for the election are due to be sent to the papers for publication within the next week. Additionally, procedures to process any mass influx of ballots must, at all times, take into account the health and safety of the election workforce. This includes designating or securing facilities that permit the handling of these ballots at safe 6-foot perimeters by gloved & masked, bipartisan processing teams. Further, ADA compliance must also be paramount, representing yet another integral piece of planning that well demands our consideration and implementation. This option requires immediate attention and action to enable all parties involved to be prepared to conduct an election that will allow the voters of the great State of New Jersey to have confidence in their Election Officials, whether they are representing the State, County or Local level.

Lastly, we offer the postponement of the June 2nd Primary for your consideration. As Executive Order #105 moved March and April elections to May 12th, similarly, New Jersey's Primary might be repositioned later in the summer. COVID-19 numbers later in the summer are predicted to decline. This might open up options like numbers 1 and 2 above as more realistic. For the 10 counties hosting May 12th elections, a postponement would also broaden the gap in the sending and receiving of ballots concurrently for two elections otherwise separated by less than a month.

Governor Murphy, all of the above-mentioned options take thoughtful deliberation and planning while simultaneously upholding standards to protect the integrity of the election at hand. It is our collective goal to work effectively and efficiently with the Secretary of State, the Division of Elections and public health officials, to ensure that New Jersey voters safely and securely cast their ballots in the 2020 Primary Election in the manner deemed most appropriate and safe for all. For these reasons and those contained herein, we respectfully ask for a decision no later than April 3, 2020 so that we can move forward with unity and purpose.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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