

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
H-232 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
H-204 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
S-230 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
S-221 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leaders Schumer, McConnell, and McCarthy:

As Congress prepares additional legislation to protect the American people from COVID-19 and provide financial relief, we also must protect our elections. Americans are facing unprecedented disruptions to their daily lives, and we need to make sure that in the midst of this pandemic people do not lose their ability to vote.

Officials in Louisiana, Georgia, Ohio, Maryland, Kentucky, and Connecticut announced that they will postpone their presidential primary elections, and election officials across the country have expressed concern regarding how this public health emergency will affect upcoming elections. We must take critical steps to ensure that states have the resources they need to address this threat head-on.

Medical professionals predict that in order to prevent the spread of the virus, we may need to continue to limit physical interaction for an extended period. Experts have said that development of a vaccine is still 12 to 18 months away, and our elections are fast approaching – fewer than eight months away. Time is of the essence to ensure our democracy is prepared to overcome the challenges brought on by this global pandemic.

In light of the threats that this virus poses, every American should be able to cast a ballot by mail without excuse. That means states will have to scale their vote-by-mail processes in a way that hasn't been done before. This will require the federal government to provide swift assistance to states so that they can begin to purchase the supplies and equipment necessary to ensure every American can safely vote in 2020. States will need funding to print, process, and receive millions of ballots by mail. They will also need to recruit and train new poll workers because older Americans – who usually step up and work the polls on Election Day – are most vulnerable to the virus.

In addition to these critical steps, we must ensure that states have the capacity to expand early in-person voting so that those who cannot mail a ballot do not face exposure to long lines and crowded polling places. We must also work with the United States Postal Service to ensure that every ballot postmarked on or before the election is counted. The faster we provide this assistance and begin to prepare, the greater the impact these efforts will have in November.

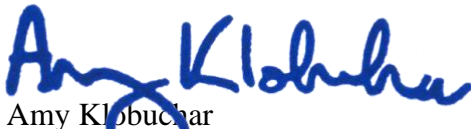
Non-partisan election experts at the Bipartisan Policy Center and the Brennan Center have estimated that protecting the 2020 elections from COVID-19 will cost roughly \$2 billion. When considered against a \$1 trillion supplemental appropriation, funding for our elections would be just 0.2% of the overall relief package.

This week, Democratic Senators introduced the *Natural Disaster and Emergency Ballot Act of 2020* to provide the resources necessary to ensure every American can vote in November. As Ranking Member of the Rules Committee and Ranking Member of the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, we have leading responsibility for authorizing legislation and appropriating funds for elections, and we urge you to include this legislation in the relief package.


It is the role of states to administer elections, but it is also the role of the federal government to ensure states have the resources they need to effectively administer those elections and safeguard them against national threats. We are facing an unprecedented national emergency, and as Congress works to provide medical and economic relief to states, we must also help our election officials and voters.

Protecting the right to vote is critical – and we can't let this crisis stop Americans from being heard at the ballot box. Americans cast ballots during the Civil War and after September 11, 2001. No matter the magnitude of the threat facing our country, the most fundamental part of our democracy – our elections – must go on.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator