

July 24, 2020

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## VOTING BY MAIL STRONGLY ENCOURAGED FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS CONCERNED ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

Aledo, Illinois – With coronavirus a continuing concern as the 2020 general election approaches, the Illinois State Board of Elections encourages voters to consider voting by mail as a safe, secure and convenient option to in-person voting.

The Illinois General Assembly this year passed an election bill that provides many safeguards against the spread of coronavirus in the voting process for the Nov. 3 general election. Chief among them are provisions to increase voting by mail throughout the state.

Among the special vote-by-mail provisions for the 2020 general election are:

- All voters who voted in either the March 2020 primary, April 2019 consolidated or November 2018 general election will receive by mail an application for a vote-by-mail ballot
- Those who registered to vote or updated their registration between March 18 and July 31 will be mailed an application for vote-by-mail ballot
- The state's online voter registration site now allows users to request a mail ballot when they register
- The application for vote-by-mail ballot can be found at [www.mercercountyil.org](http://www.mercercountyil.org). Ballots may be mailed to the County Clerk or emailed to [sblaser@mercercountyil.org](mailto:sblaser@mercercountyil.org)

Ballots will be mailed to applicants beginning Sept. 24, which is also the first day of early voting. The deadline for applying for a mail ballot is 4:00 p.m. Oct. 29. After Oct. 29, voters can still receive a mail ballot by applying in person at the Mercer County Clerk's office, 100 SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Aledo, IL. Ballots must be postmarked no later than Nov. 3 to be accepted, and properly postmarked ballots will be accepted through Nov. 17.

The new law also establishes protocols to ensure proper verification of ballots before they are accepted and to inform voters in a timely manner if their ballot is rejected. This begins with a review of the voter's signature by a panel of three election judges within two days of receipt of the ballot. A ballot may be rejected for an invalid signature only by unanimous decision of the judges.

The ballot may be rejected if two of the three judges agree that:

- The ballot envelope was delivered opened
- The certification envelope contains no signature
- The voter has already cast a ballot
- The voter voted in person on Election Day
- The voter is not a duly registered voter

If a ballot is rejected based on a signature or lack of signature or because the ballot envelope was delivered opened, the voter must be notified within two days or within one day if the

rejection occurs after Election Day. The new law contains provisions for the voter to address these problems.

County Clerk Sara Blaser would like to remind all voters that she is doing everything in her power to ensure that all polling places will be open for in-person voting on Election Day, and she will keep the public advised of any changes that may occur.