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Voting Rights Groups Praise House Elections Legislation That Will Protect Voters

On Thursday night, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed with overwhelming support a very strong reform to our election laws. The legislation will allow every voter who wants to vote from the safety of their own home to do so. The House has recognized the urgency of passing legislation to help protect our fall elections and moved quickly to help keep voters safe.

The legislation takes critical steps to promote ballot access and safety in the fall's elections, by sending mail ballot applications for both the September 1 and November 3 elections to all registered voters, creating an online portal for mail ballot applications, expanding early voting, and providing safer in-person voting on election day.

We commend the House for passing such a strong bill. We particularly appreciate the efforts of House Election Laws Committee Chairman John Lawn, who worked with all stakeholders to craft an excellent piece of legislation. Rep. Lawn and House Ways and Means Chairman Aaron Michlewitz, Assistant Majority Leader Michael Moran, and Speaker DeLeo worked with members, election officials, and advocates to further improve the bill by, among other things:

- Allowing local election officials to process mail ballots before election day in a central location
- Counting ballots postmarked by election day but received by the Friday after (for the general election only)
- Providing return postage for ballots and applications for ballots
- Providing more time for voter registration before the election (shortening the blackout period from 20 to 10 days)

“The House legislation embodies the goals of voting rights advocates: to allow every voter to vote safely, to expand voter participation, and to help ensure that every voter’s ballot is counted,” said Pam Wilmot, Executive Director of Common Cause Massachusetts. “We look forward to working with the Senate to ensure swift passage and to correct a few outstanding issues, including those about counting ballots received after election day.”

“With the bill passed in the House on 6/4/20, everyone in Massachusetts wins. We hope the Senate will take swift action on this bill and the Governor will sign to ensure elections that are accessible and safe,” said **Janet Domenitz, Executive Director of MASSPIRG.**

“We applaud the House for swiftly passing H.4768. The bill, with the included amendments, introduces robust reforms that strengthen our elections in light of COVID19, and deserve to be permanently implemented moving forward.” said **Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, Executive Director, MassVOTE.**

“This election is going to be one of the most consequential in our lifetime, with enormous implications for communities of color,” said **Rahsaan Hall, director of the Racial Justice Program at the ACLU of Massachusetts.** “We’re grateful to the House for moving this vital bill quickly. We need to protect democratic participation, safeguard public health, and ensure equitable ballot access for all voters.”

“Safe elections and strong voter participation will pave the road to recovery from COVID-19. We will work with community leaders to ensure that voters of color, voters with disabilities, renters, and voters with limited English proficiency can participate in safe elections,” said **Beth Huang, Director of the Massachusetts Voter Table.**

“We applaud the House for swiftly acting on H.4768,” said **Sophia Hall, Lawyers for Civil Rights.** “The measures taken by this Bill will ensure that all voters, particularly disenfranchised voters are not barred from casting a vote in this election cycle.”

“We commend the House for its swift passage of H. 4768 which recognizes that every Massachusetts voter must have safe options for accessing the ballot box this fall whether in-person or by mail,” said **Patricia Comfort, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts.**

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The Election Modernization Coalition is comprised of the ACLU of Massachusetts, Common Cause Massachusetts, Lawyers for Civil Rights, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, MASSPIRG, MassVOTE, and the Massachusetts Voter Table.