

Guidance and Considerations for 2020 General Election

While the novel coronavirus outbreak is an ever-changing situation, we know that the risk of COVID-19 spread increases based on the number of people an individual interacts with and the length of time of the interaction. The following guidance and key considerations for the 2020 General Election come from the League's election preparation expertise, lessons learned from the 2020 Primaries, and [recommendations from the CDC](#). No voter should have to choose between their safety and casting a ballot.

COVID-19 and the General Election

Each election the League plays a key role in providing voters with the information and resources they need to participate in elections. This includes educating the public about the process; fighting against voter suppression tactics; and expanding access to the ballot. In the face of COVID-19, the 2020 state and federal primaries increased vote-by-mail and made changes to in-person voting--resulting in unique challenges expected to be faced in the 2020 General Election.

Please find an overview of key considerations for vote-by-mail and in-person voting below in preparation for the 2020 General Election.

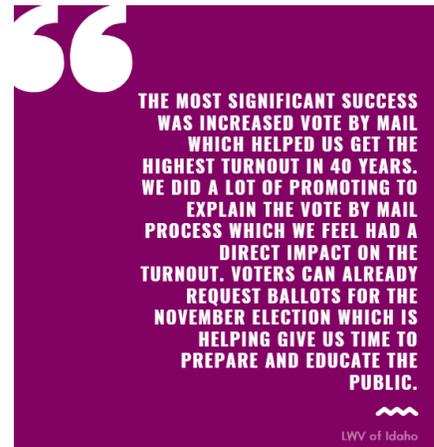
Increased Vote-By-Mail and Absentee Voting

To accommodate the need for social distancing and limit election day in-person polling, most states expanded their vote-by-mail (VBM) and absentee voting. While some states have a vote by mail infrastructure in place, a change of this magnitude to the election process requires significant preparation. Key considerations when dealing with increased VBM and absentee voting includes coordinating closely with community leaders and partner organizations; ensuring accessible drop box locations; and starting public education efforts early.

Organizing and Public education

Start education efforts early. Election administration changes impact all voters, so starting voter education early will ensure people have the information they need to cast their ballot (such as how to obtain, fill out, and return a ballot), help combat misinformation, and provide voters time to adjust to new voting processes. In Kentucky, for instance, roughly 15,000 ballots were thrown out because they were not completed correctly.

Work with partners to target low-propensity voters and communities disproportionately targeted and impacted by voter suppression tactics. The League has the biggest impact on voter turnout when focusing on low-propensity voters. For any election, it is important to have an outreach strategy to engage those who are often most left out of conversations and engagement, such as first-time voters. Leagues reported that having strong relationships with organizations that work directly with low-propensity voting communities and those



disproportionately impacted by voter suppression tactics helped spread the word about key voting information.

Utilize **VOTE411**. [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org) is a key resource for voters to provide up-to-date election information to voters about how, when, and where to vote. Be sure to send updates to Megan Brown (mbrown@lwv.org) to help us keep this tool up to date.

Communications

Be prepared to address misinformation. While expansion of VBM is an important way to increase access to the ballot, we know that there is much misinformation and distrust around this process. To support your work, [see these talking points on Countering Attacks Related to Vote-By-Mail](#).



Prepare voters for adjusted timeline in results. Vote by mail and absentee voting often means that election results will be delayed. This is an opportunity to incorporate messages about the increased time for tallying votes to make sure the public is prepared for the adjusted timeline.

Advocacy and Litigation

Advocate for equal access to the ballot. Systemic racism embedded in our election processes means that often times Black communities and communities of color face disproportionate barriers to the ballot. Vote by mail and Absentee voting can mean the use of drop boxes. The location of drop boxes plays a critical role in one's ability and likelihood to return their ballot. Work with partner organizations and communities to ensure that elections officials are placing drop boxes in areas that best serve voters.



In-person voting changes and challenges

In-person voting remains necessary to ensure that voters have the options they need to access their ballot. For states preserving in-person voting, key considerations include ensuring voter safety, recruiting poll workers, and providing up-to-date information about polling hours and locations.

Organizing and Public Education

Recruit poll workers. One of the most common barriers to administering an in-person election in the primaries included having sufficient poll workers. Currently, the majority of poll workers fall into the higher risk category for those who may fall severely ill from COVID-19. Anyone working the polls deserves to feel safe and have their needs met, so advocating for sufficient PPE for poll workers while recruiting a diversified poll worker base that is representative of the communities being served is equally important.

Provide up-to-date in-person polling information. In an ever-changing reality of COVID-19, the League plays an important role as election watchdogs and is able to provide changes to polling place location and hours on [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org). During the primaries, we saw many--often last-minute--changes to polling locations and hours and it is our duty to ensure that voters have the information they need to participate in elections. Be certain to send updates to Megan Brown (mbrown@lwv.org).

Create a safe and celebratory in-person atmosphere. In some states, the national guard and police officers were called upon to provide Election Day support due to a lack of poll workers. Given the police violence targeted towards Black communities, it is important to ensure polling locations feel safe to voters. Work with community partners and leaders to dedicate time and resources to localities that may be particularly vulnerable to intimidation tactics that can cause voter suppression.

Communications

Review the League's talking points. The League is most effective when speaking with one voice. To support work in the lead up to the General Election, please review the following talking points: [Protecting and Expanding In-person Voting and Vote-by-mail](#), [Election Security talking points](#), [Talking to Voters During COVID-19](#).

Advocacy and Litigation

Advocate for safe voting conditions. Some voters and poll workers during the 2020 primaries reported that voting conditions that did not align with CDC guidelines made them feel unsafe. In some circumstances, this led to poll workers not showing up or voters not casting their ballot. Start working with elections officials now to ensure polling sites are large enough to accommodate social distancing and can provide PPE for poll workers and voters.

Increase early in-person voting. Many states in the 2020 primary cancelled or shortened early in-person voting, yet we know that increased early in-person voting can help limit the number of voters that have to congregate in one area at a time.

