

A RESOLUTION

23-504

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

July 28, 2020

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to amend the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955 to require the Board of Elections, for the November 3, 2020, General Election, to operate Vote Centers, operate no fewer than 80 polling places, including one for eligible individuals incarcerated in the Central Detention Facility and Correctional Treatment Facility, mail every registered voter an absentee ballot and postage-paid return envelope, publish and mail a paper voter guide, email registered voters a voter guide and information about the General Election, to require voter registration agencies to promote the Board's plans for the General Election, and to remove the requirement that the Board post a list of qualified electors registered to vote in libraries and public buildings, and for other purposes.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "General Election Preparations Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2020".

Sec. 2. (a) The District of Columbia Board of Elections ("Board") is an independent District agency, overseen by a Chairperson and 2 other board members, and is responsible for administering elections in the District.

(b) On June 2, 2020, the District held its Primary Election. The Primary Election was significantly affected by the unprecedented public health crisis of COVID-19, which forced the Board to fundamentally overhaul its operations and implement a hybrid in-person voting and mail-in voting plan on short notice.

(c) The Board experienced significant operational and technical challenges leading up to and during the Primary Election, such as ensuring voters were able to adequately track their mail-in ballot requests, timely and properly sending mail-in ballots, responding to voter inquiries, and outreach and communications to residents. These issues were not resolved by the Board prior to the Primary Election and led to hours-long lines at Vote Centers, an overwhelming number of voters not receiving their requested mail-in ballots, and ultimately, disenfranchisement.

(d) This emergency legislation will better prepare the District for the General Election. During the Primary Election, the Board opened 20 Vote Centers for in-person voting. On

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Election Day, many Vote Centers saw hours-long lines of residents who had not received a mail-in ballot or who preferred to vote in-person. Importantly, the emergency legislation increases the number of Vote Centers to no fewer than 80, in order to maximize voter turnout, manage lines, and still maintain social distancing. While mail-in voting should be promoted and prioritized, the District must be able to accommodate voters who prefer or need to vote in person.

(e) The emergency legislation also requires the Board to mail every voter a mail-in ballot and a postage-paid return envelope, publish a paper voter guide, and more proactively deploy its email list to arm voters with information about the General Election.

(f) Lastly, the emergency legislation conforms the COVID-19-related legislative changes made in the spring for the Primary and Special Elections to the General Election, in addition to other changes.

Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the General Election Preparations Emergency Amendment Act of 2020 be adopted after a single reading.

Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.