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MAGAZINE

VIRGINIA TOWN & CITY

April 10, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

Thank you for the calm and deliberate leadership that you have shown in facing the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Virginia Municipal League was very disappointed in the guidance provided to our localities on Wednesday April 8, 2020 regarding our May elections. Our Legislative Committee convened an emergency meeting via conference call on Thursday and asks that you strongly consider the position of the localities that are subject to these May elections.

VML adamantly opposes discarding any ballots that have already been cast. Voters across Virginia submitted their choices for local leadership in good faith that their voices would be heard, with encouragement from the Administration and the Department of Elections to vote absentee under Reason 2A. Localities, under the same direction, have already spent thousands of dollars distributing and processing absentee ballots.

By postponing ongoing elections until November, the Commonwealth is opening the field of candidacy for both currently contested and uncontested elections by extending deadlines and allowing for new write-in campaigns. VML insists that all original filing deadlines remain in place.

The Governor’s plan to keep current officials in office past term expirations of June 30th presents questions of adherence to the *Code of Virginia*. It also keeps in office officials who are not and have no plans to seek reelection, whether for political or personal reasons.

Finally, the announcement that any voter eligible to vote in November may now vote in postponed local elections regardless of their eligibility as of May 5th produces alarming constitutional questions.

VML would strongly urge the Administration and General Assembly to consider moving the date of May elections to another Tuesday, taking into account the expiration of terms on June 30th.

We appreciate greatly your consideration of this request. Please feel free to contact Michelle Gowdy at mgowdy@vml.org or (434) 579-3497 to discuss.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Smigiel, Jr.
President, VML

cc: Commissioner Virginia Department of Elections
Robbins, Allison, VRAV President

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