



★ VIRGINIA ★  
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

**TO:** General Registrars and Electoral Board Members in Localities Holding May 19, 2020 Elections  
**FROM:** Christopher Piper, Commissioner  
**RE:** May 19, 2020 Elections

---

Earlier today, Governor Northam announced Executive Order 59 moving the May 5, 2020 election to May 19, 2020. In order to provide guidance, below are FAQs that will hopefully address your questions and concerns.

On a personal note, I know these have been trying times for everyone, both professionally and personally. The Administration has always put the safety and well-being of voters and election officials first, and will continue to do so. We must work together to implement best practices to ensure a smooth and safe election on May 19, 2020.

The Department of Elections will collaborate with the Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps to develop training for members of the elections community, and to provide support at polling locations on Election Day. We will be in touch with additional details soon.

As always, thank you for your dedication and service to the Commonwealth and please continue to share your questions and concerns and especially your ideas for how to safely, securely and uniformly conduct elections in Virginia.

## FAQs:

### **WILL ADDITIONAL CANDIDATES BE ABLE TO QUALIFY FOR THE NEW MAY DATE?**

No, the candidates who are currently qualified will remain the only candidates on the ballot on May 19, 2020.

### **WILL WE NEED TO REPRINT BALLOTS WITH THE NEW DATE?**

No, you can use the ballots you originally printed.

## **WHEN WILL ABSENTEE VOTING END?**

The last day for a voter to request an absentee ballot will be May 12, 2020. The last day for in-person absentee voting will be May 16, 2020.

The last day for returning an absentee ballot shall be 7:00pm on May 19, 2020 except as provided under § 24.2-709(B) of the Code of Virginia.

## **WILL THERE BE A NEW VOTER REGISTRATION DATE?**

The voter registration dates in place for the May 5, 2020 election will stay in place for the new date of May 19, 2020.

## **Safe and Sanitary Polling Locations**

It is critical that all polling locations be operational on Election Day and that those polling locations are operating in a manner that protects public health. Please see information below for how to set up a sanitary polling location for your election officers and voters alike.

- You can find CDC guidelines on polling locations [here](#).
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting** the polling location is just as important as poll workers and voters practicing safe techniques. Poll workers should wash their hands properly as often as they can ([refer to the CDC guidelines on handwashing here](#)) and refrain from touching their faces.
- **Make a step-by-step cleaning plan** to mitigate the risk of contagions, including a cleaning plan for voting-associated equipment. This includes electronic poll books, laptops, keyboards, and voting machines. For a list of vendor and manufacturer guidance on cleaning voting machines [click here](#).
- **Social Distancing strategies** should be adopted in and around polling locations.
- Poll workers should maintain at least 6 feet between themselves and other poll workers and between themselves and voters whenever possible.

Localities should also explore:

- Marking the ground 6 feet apart to encourage voters in line to take precautions (painter's tape works best).
- Ensuring voting booths are at minimum 6 feet apart to minimize risk.
- Having voters wait outside of the polling place so that the location does not become crowded.
- Encouraging curbside voting for eligible voters.
- Utilizing volunteers from the **Virginia Medical Reserve Corps** to assist with sanitation and public health guidance on Election Day (additional information forthcoming).

**Signage** can be a helpful tool in informing the public of necessary precautions. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Signs telling voters to wait outside if there are more than 10 people inside.
- Signs encouraging curbside voting for eligible voters.
- Signage with CDC guidelines on how to prevent the spread of the virus and how to social distance. Fact sheets to display can be found [here](#).

### **Handling Mailed Absentee Ballots**

The CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-cov/faq.html>), the World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>), as well as the Surgeon General have indicated that there is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is being spread through the mail.

More information can be found on the USPS website:

(<https://about.usps.com/newsroom/statements/usps-statement-on-coronavirus.htm>)

The safety and health of election officers and voters should remain the highest priority. Information can change daily and it is important to stay up-to-date on the latest information from the CDC, WHO, and USPS. At the end of this communication, you will find helpful links to review.

ELECT has been working to obtain and distribute the following supplies to help ensure you can operate a sanitary polling location:

<b>Material</b>
Hand Sanitizer
Masks
Face Shields
Gloves
Single Use Pens
Single Use Privacy Sleeves

As these materials are received, we will update you. We are ordering quantities based on information you provided in the survey we sent out last week. If you have already obtained any of these supplies, please contact your liaison immediately so that we can redirect the supply to another locality. More specific information on quantities being provided to your locality and delivery estimates will be out next week. In addition, it is important that you also reach out to your local emergency management departments to request safety materials and supplies.

# Guidance on Elections as a Critical Function of Government

Please note that Executive Order 53 which ordered temporary restrictions on a number of non-essential businesses specifically exempts functions which are essential to the operation of government (see section 9e). Elections are considered an essential function of government and therefore public buildings which are used as polling locations are exempt from the Executive Order.

Please feel free to share this statement with your locality administration. I am also happy to communicate with locality administration directly.

## Helpful Links

- USPS Statement on COVID-19: <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/statements/usps-statement-on-coronavirus.htm>
- ELECT Officer of Election Sign Up: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/officer-of-elections/>
- ELECT Officer of Election Online Training: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/training/>
- EPA List of Products to Prevent COVID-19: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- CDC Recommendation on Masks along with Instructions for Do-it-Yourself Masks: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>
- CDC Guidelines for Polling Places: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/election-polling-locations.html>
- CDC Guidelines for Hand Washing: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
- Voting Machine Sanitization Guidelines: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/coronavirus-covid-19-resources>
- CDC Fact Sheets: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>