



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Christine Wellons, Legislative Attorney
Purpose: To introduce agenda item – no vote expected

AGENDA ITEM #2S
June 21, 2020
Introduction

SUBJECT

Resolution in support of Mailing Ballots to Voters for the 2020 General Election

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

N/A

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

N/A

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

The resolution would call upon Governor Hogan to require that a ballot be mailed to each registered voter; that postage pre-paid return envelopes be included with the ballots; that touch-free drop off boxes be provided for ballots; and that the Governor defer to Local Boards of Election regarding appropriate numbers of early voting locations and polling locations.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

N/A

This report contains:

Resolution

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: July 21, 2020
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: Council Support for Mailing Ballots to Voters for the 2020 General Election

Background

1. A new coronavirus disease, named COVID-19, appeared in China in December 2019 and spread extremely quickly. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared the disease a pandemic. By July 9, 2020 there were more than 3.1 million confirmed cases and 133,000 confirmed deaths in the United States.
2. Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency to slow the disease and has issued several Executive Orders with actions that include, but are not limited to, closing senior centers and adult medical day care programs, closing all nonessential businesses, and limiting the number of people that can gather.
3. On July 16, in Maryland there were 75,664 confirmed cases and 3,215 deaths, and in Montgomery County there were 16,056 confirmed cases and 725 deaths.
4. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, along with many health experts, has advised voters to seek alternatives to voting in person this November.
5. Maryland election officials have warned the Governor that processing absentee ballot applications might overwhelm elections systems in the General Election. Maryland should not follow the example of Wisconsin's disastrous April primary, in which many voters did not receive their absentee ballots in time to cast them, even though they requested them on time. In Washington D.C., the city government has decided to send out ballots directly to voters as a result of problems during the June special election.
6. On June 8, 2020, Mr. Hogan ordered the State Board of Elections to conduct the General Election with in-person and absentee voting, without mandating that ballots automatically be mailed to voters. Mr. Hogan's change in strategy from what the State did in the Primary

Election would confuse voters, who would not understand that they need to apply for absentee ballots for the General Election.

7. State and County election officials warn that it might be impossible to properly staff every voting location.

8. Many poll workers are older residents who are at high risk for coronavirus complications.

9. Requiring voters to appear in person to cast their ballots unnecessarily puts voters' lives and the lives of poll workers at risk.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

The Council calls upon Governor Hogan to cause to be mailed to each registered Maryland voter a ballot for the 2020 General Election. Each mailed ballot should include a postage pre-paid return envelope, and touch-free drop boxes should be available to voters to submit their completed ballots. The Council also calls upon the Governor to defer to each local Board of Elections to recommend, in consultation with the County Health Officer, an appropriate number of early voting sites and polling places in the 2020 General Election.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council