Secretary of State to mail absent voter ballot applications to all May 5 voters

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Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson announced today that absent voter ballot applications will be mailed by her office to all voters in the May 5 election to help ensure both public health and democratic rights are protected.

“Our country has a long history of carrying out elections in times of crisis, and we are fortunate to have the tools to uphold that history today,” said Benson. “Voting by mail protects public health, is highly accessible, and was clearly mandated by Michiganders when they overwhelmingly voted in 2018 to amend our state constitution and afford everyone this right.”

For the past two weeks, Secretary Benson has been working with clerks across the state to determine if they need to hold an election in May, or if the entity placing the item on their ballot could postpone to August. The majority of the questions on the May ballots are school district millages and bonds, and many districts have postponed. Benson gave clerks and the entities a few more days this week to make their decision.

For the entities that do not postpone (in several cases, because existing critical funds would expire), the Bureau of Elections will mail absent voter ballot applications to all voters with postage-paid return envelopes unless those voters have already requested an absent voter ballot. The state will include a cover letter that voting by mail is the optimal way to cast a ballot due to the public health crisis. The state will assist local jurisdictions in ensuring postage-paid return envelopes are mailed to all who request ballots.

“We are also working to ensure the health and safety guidelines of our state and federal government are followed in the lead up to and administration of the May 5 election,” said Benson. “This includes working to recruit election workers to serve in all jurisdictions and providing hygiene supplies and explicit guidance on how to process absent-voter ballots and carry out other election duties while observing strict health precautions.”

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at **Michigan.gov/Coronavirus** and **CDC.gov/Coronavirus**.

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