August 12th, 2020

(Atlanta) -- Georgia's State Election Board unanimously voted to approve a rule authorizing the Secretary of State's upcoming online absentee ballot request form portal. The online portal, which is currently undergoing testing, will make it easier for both Georgia voters to request absentee ballots in the future and for county officials to process the dramatic increase in absentee ballots seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The State Election Board's endorsement of the online absentee ballot request portal is a significant step forward for voting in Georgia," said Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger. "Already a national leader with automatic registration, three weeks of early voting, and no-excuse absentee ballot voting, the new portal will keep Georgia at the forefront of voter access and security."

On Monday, August 10, the State Election Board met to discuss and vote on a number of issues, including an emergency rule authorizing the creation of an online absentee ballot request portal. Raffensperger is the chair of the five-member board.

The new rule authorizes Raffensperger "to create a system that allows registered voters to submit an absentee ballot application via an online portal." The requester's identity will be verified by "matching the voter's name, date of birth, and Georgia driver's license or identification card number" with information contained on file in the voter registration system.

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Raffensperger first announced the online absentee ballot request portal during a press conference on June 17. The portal will make it easier for Georgia voters to request their ballots, while also saving on postage costs. Additionally, the online system will make it easier to track absentee ballot requests to help overwhelmed counties better fulfill the requests that come in and send out absentee ballots in a timely manner.

The online portal is currently undergoing testing and is on track for public release later this month.

Due to the massive surge in absentee ballot requests during the COVID-19 pandemic, many county governments, the entities responsible for processing both the requests and the absentee ballots themselves, were overwhelmed. The online portal provides a simple and secure tool for counties to better provide an avenue for Georgia voters to cast ballots from the safety of their homes.

Georgia is recognized as a national leader in elections. It was the first state in the country to implement the trifecta of automatic voter registration, at least 16 days of early voting (which has been called the "gold standard"), and no-excuse absentee voting. Georgia continues to set records for voter turnout and election participation, seeing the largest increase in average turnout of any state in the 2018 midterm election and record primary turnout in 2020, with over 1.1 million absentee-by-mail voters and over 1.2 million in-person voters utilizing Georgia's new, secure, paper ballot voting system.

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