

Older Adults and Voting – Draft Recommendations

A. Voter registration - Increase access and provide training assistance

1. **Voter Registration Applications** (EL-131 – English, EL-131H – Hmong, and EL 131S - Spanish) should be made available by the Wisconsin Elections Commission at public locations throughout each community - Aging and Disability Resource Centers, senior dining sites, senior centers, human/social service agencies, income maintenance offices, public housing, energy assistance offices, long-term care facilities, **municipal offices**, post offices and libraries. Online voter registration information (MyVote.wi.gov/) should also be fully available in Spanish and Hmong.
2. **Outreach materials** promoting the availability of Voter Registration applications should be developed by the Wisconsin Elections Commission and be posted at the public locations noted above, as well as made available for posting at banks, in elevators (office buildings, clinics, stores, etc.), places of worship, gas stations, **grocery stores**, and other community locations. Voter outreach should include specific materials and formats targeted at reaching voters who are at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and are self-isolating, voters with disabilities, voters of color, voters who are low-income (and others who may not have reliable internet access), voters who are homeless, and voters whose primary language is not English.
3. **Electronic outreach materials** promoting voter registration and the availability of Voter Registration applications should be developed by the Wisconsin Elections Commission and made available for use on websites, in e-newsletters, on social media platforms, and on intranet systems. **To the greatest extent possible, the Wisconsin Elections Commission should contact the entities listed in the first paragraph and provide promotional language and links to downloadable and e-versions of the voter registration application and absentee ballot request form for posting on those entities websites.**
4. **Voter Education Ambassador Training** should be made readily available by the Wisconsin Elections Commission to provide consistent, up-to-date training to volunteers across the state willing to assist voters by accurately answering questions about voter ID, voter registration, absentee voting, and the election process.
5. **Voter Assistance** should be required to be included by the state Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources in all county/tribal aging unit plan instructions and Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) contracts. Aging plans - which represent the intent of the county/tribe *to assure that older people have the opportunity to realize their full potential and to participate in all areas of community life* - should include helping older adults exercise their citizenship by providing assistance with **obtaining** voter IDs; voter registration and absentee voting forms; resources for election process questions; transportation to DMV office, clerk's office, and/or polling site; obtaining copies of residence documents/photo IDs; and witness signatures. ADRCs provide accurate, unbiased information on all aspects of life related to aging or living with a disability. **[Text deleted].**
6. **Automatic voter registration** should be made available by the Wisconsin Elections Commission and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation whenever eligible individuals obtain or renew a driver's license or state photo ID.
7. **Photo IDs** for voter registration should be made easier to access by individuals in underserved communities by creating an online process to obtain a photo ID for voting purposes and by expanding the days and hours of DMV availability and/or providing mobile locations (municipal buildings, libraries, ADRCs) where photo IDs can be obtained.

B. Absentee voting - Increase access and improve options:

1. **Mail absentee ballot applications** to all registered voters without an absentee ballot request already on file before every election *and* to individuals currently living in residential care settings **[delete text]** regardless if they have registered using their current address or have a request on file.
2. **Absentee ballot application** (EL-121 – English, EL-121H – Hmong, and EL-121S - Spanish) should be made available by the Wisconsin Elections Commission at public locations throughout each community - Aging and Disability Resource Centers, senior dining sites, senior centers, human/social service agencies, income maintenance offices, public housing, energy assistance offices, long-term care facilities, post offices and libraries. Online absentee ballot request information ([MyVote.wi.gov/](https://myvote.wi.gov/)) should also be fully available in Spanish and Hmong.
3. **Absentee voting assistance should be available for** individuals completing the application, witness signature, transportation, etc. - see A5. above.
4. **In-person early voting** options should be expanded for voters who do not want to vote by mail but want/need to avoid crowds and lines on election day. Options should include designated early voting sites in easily accessible locations (with accessible voting machines available) with established hours posted and drive-thru or curbside early voting at specific sites on designated dates/times. MyVote.gov should be enhanced to include municipal postings of locations, dates, and time availability for in-person early voting.
5. **Secure absentee ballot drop-boxes** should be made available in every municipality in easily accessible, central locations, to ensure all voters have a safe option for ensuring ballots are returned before the deadline. At a minimum, a secure drop-box should be available up to and including election day at every polling site.
6. **USPS Intelligent mail barcodes** should be integrated into the absentee ballot mailing process to allow for tracking ballot delivery and return.
7. **An exemption for the witness signature** should be made available for those who self-certify they are unable to obtain the witness signature **after reasonable effort to do so. [including a phone call to their local municipal clerk].**
8. **Accessible absentee ballot options** should be developed to ensure voters with disabilities are able to complete their ballots without assistance.

C. In-person voting at the polls – Improve options and expand recruitment, training, and safety efforts:

1. **In-person voting options** should be retained to ensure access to voting for voters who have difficulty accessing or low-utilization of the absentee voting process (Black Americans who move more frequently and traditionally rely on in-person voting; homeless individuals who lack a fixed, regular nighttime residence; voters with disabilities who may require in-person accommodations to vote privately), as well as voters who missed voter registration deadlines and will need to access same-day voter registration.

2. **Polling place consolidation** should be monitored by the Wisconsin Elections Commission to ensure voters will not have difficulty accessing their polling sites, will not be subjected to unreasonably long lines at the polls, and Wis. Stat. § [5.35\(2\)](#) is maintained (requires municipalities to provide at least one voting booth for each 200 voters who voted in the last general election).
3. **Curbside voting**, as required by law, should be offered and publicized at every polling site. Curbside voting locations should be easily identified and provide instructions for obtaining assistance.
4. **Alternate polling sites**, if needed, should be near the closed site, ADA compliant, and accessible by transportation options similar to those available at the closed site.
5. **Trained staff and volunteers** should be available in adequate supply to work at the polls. This includes a reserve of non-high-risk individuals (during a public health emergency) to replace any of the standard cadre, as needed. Training of new volunteers should begin immediately and incorporate lessons learned from the April and May 2020 elections.
6. **Standardized PPE** should be available for poll workers and staff at every polling site. These supplies should be stockpiled and training on how to use it should be provided.
7. **Action plans for conducting elections during a state declared emergency** should be developed by and for each municipality. Action plans should include the municipality's plan for addressing PPE needs; reserve poll workers; identifying alternate voting sites; securing other supplies/plans to keep poll workers and voters safe; and communication with staff, volunteers, and the public.

D. Voting in residential care facilities – Improve access and provide training:

1. **Alternative options to Special Voting Deputies (SVD)** should be developed when SVDs are not permitted access to residential care facilities to ensure access to voting for residents of nursing homes and other care facilities. Options should include mailing absentee ballots to voters who have a request on file *and* to all individuals currently living in residential care settings **[DELETE: who want to vote]** regardless if they have registered using their current address (facility rosters can be used to verify residency) or have a request on file.
2. **Care facility staff** should be permitted to assist voters residing in the facility and should be provided information, forms, and training to enable them to provide needed voter support and assistance to residents.
3. **Care facility care plan/chart** for each resident should indicate whether an individual wishes to vote in upcoming elections, so assistance filing an absentee ballot request and ongoing voting support can be provided.

*Note: We propose to further identify the above draft recommendations as either “things we can do now” or “things to work on”.