

April 3, 2020

RE: Senate Government Operations Committee – voting and elections

AARP has been working to promote the health and well-being of older Americans for more than sixty years. On behalf of our 130,000 Vermont members and all older Vermonters statewide, we appreciate the demonstrated leadership and significant, nonpartisan response to the coronavirus pandemic, as well as the ongoing efforts required as we move forward. The enactment of H. 681 sets out voting procedures that could assist in voter turnout, especially for vulnerable adults. As you consider the next steps to address the various facets of this public health emergency, we urge you to continue to be especially mindful of older adults, who are most at risk from this disease.

For nearly 40 years, the turnout of voters over age 45 has significantly outpaced that of younger Americans. In the 2016 presidential election, for example, 71 percent of Americans over 65 voted, compared with 46 percent among 18- to 29-year-olds, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. People over 65 continue to vote far more than any other age group.

AARP Vermont is recommending the following for the 2020 Elections:

- Provide full transparency of any new guidelines, dates, and measures for voting in the 2020 elections.
- Activate emergency measures that would allow more or all Vermonters to vote by mail such as sending absentee ballots to all registered voters in the state. This would be especially useful for those in long-term care centers, medical facilities, or quarantined due to the virus. According to NCSL, there are reports that vote-by-mail elections increase turnout. They can also lead to long-term cost savings to the state through decreased staffing expenditures – though there are increased printing and up front equipment costs. More importantly, in the midst of a health crisis, it enables voters and election workers to feel safe by not requiring them to go out to participate.

- Activate the use of curbside vote in order to address the inability of Vermonters to do in-person voting due to social distancing guidelines.
- Promptly mail all Vermont voters clear communications about the any new voter guidelines, once determined.
- Assure voters that have already voted that their ballots count.

We look forward to working with you to address how the largest voting bloc in our population, the 50+ voter, can continue to have a safe and accurate way to participate in the election process during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,
Greg Marchildon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Marchildon", written in a cursive style.

AARP Vermont State Director