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May 19, 2020

Senate President Don Harmon  
Senate Minority Leader Bill Brady  
House Speaker Michael Madigan  
House Minority Leader Jim Durkin  
Members of the General Assembly

From: Joann Wong, policy analyst, Better Government Association

Re: November 2020 election

Dear Illinois lawmakers:

As the General Assembly convenes this week to act on urgent matters, the Better Government Association recommends immediate steps to protect the safety and integrity of the Nov. 3 election.

Faced with the possibility of a lingering or resurgent coronavirus, our objective is to avoid the hazards of the March 17 primary. Last-minute decisions related to COVID-19 led to poorly communicated polling location closures, long lines and big crowds, heightening the risks for poll workers and voters alike.

**The BGA urges you to pass legislation to send all registered voters a postage-paid ballot this fall.**

The BGA is not advocating for a total or permanent shift to vote by mail for November. But expanding and fortifying the state's existing vote-by-mail system is the most credible tool we have to prepare for November. Voting by mail allows electors to vote from the safety of their homes and provides a longer window in which to do so, which mitigates the possibility of last-minute problems. Given the continued uncertainty around COVID-19, Illinois should promote, expect and prepare for much greater vote-by-mail participation in November.

**The BGA recommends:**

**1. Every registered voter should receive a ballot in the mail.**

This is the most efficient way to get ballots into the hands of likely voters, whether or not they intend to vote by mail. It preserves the option to vote in the event that in-person voting becomes too difficult or dangerous because of public health concerns. Sending registered voters applications instead of ballots, as some have suggested, adds additional layers of processing and postage, resources that are better spent processing

ballots instead of applications. This effort should also be accompanied by a concerted voter education campaign to increase voting by mail, with accessibility and language considerations in mind, and to encourage early voting.

**2. Strengthen the existing vote-by-mail system by fortifying the ballot return process.**

Including pre-paid envelopes increases the level of convenience for voters and neutralizes any ability-to-pay issues. In addition to being able to return completed ballots by mail or in person at a polling location, voters should have access to 24-hour dropboxes. Dropboxes should be secure and located in community-based locations that are accessible for voters with disabilities and close to public transportation.

Details of our complete plan for the November election can be found [here](#).

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*The Better Government Association is a non-partisan, nonprofit watchdog organization working for transparency, efficiency and accountability in government in Chicago and across Illinois.*