

VOTING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

April 16, 2020

To vote or risk exposure, that is the choice.

We are in an unprecedented time where social distancing, empty buildings and the inability for safe public activities are the current new norm.

With local and primary elections approaching fast, South Dakota voters will need to determine the safest way to vote. While voting at a polling site on election day is the preferred choice, there are other options such as early voting or requesting an absentee ballot, to help keep everyone safe during this unusual election season.

The safest way to vote at this time would be Absentee Voting that can be done from home. South Dakota law requires an application for an absentee ballot. The application can be accessed at the Secretary of State's website at www.sdsos.gov or by contacting your local County Election Official (County Auditor's Office). To make sure you are registered before you apply to vote by absentee ballot, you can confirm your registration by visiting the Voter Information Portal. The absentee ballot request must be notarized, or a copy of the individual's photo ID must be sent in with the application. Individuals who may not own a copier but choose to vote absentee will have to go out into public and hope to find a family member, friend or business to help them copy their ID or try to find a Notary Republic to sign and notarize their application, placing all at risk.

Once a person has completed the application for an absentee ballot it must be sent to their County Election Official. The County Election Official will then, in return, send a paper absentee ballot to the voter. The voter then completes the ballot and returns it to their County Election Official. In South Dakota, the County Election Official must receive your application for absentee ballot no later than 5 p.m. the day before the election.

In the event of confinement because of sickness or disability, a qualified (registered) voter may apply in writing and obtain an absentee ballot by authorized messenger. An authorized messenger delivers the ballot from the County Election Official to the qualified voter and then delivers the marked ballot to the County Election Official. Any application for a ballot by authorized messenger must be received by the person in charge of the election before 3 p.m. the day of the election.

Disability Rights South Dakota is the designated Protection and Advocacy Agency for people with disabilities in South Dakota. Disability Rights staff are available by telephone to provide information or to direct you to needed resources for any questions or concerns you have about voting. Please feel free to contact us at **1-800-658-4782**.