



**Massachusetts Town Clerks' Association**  
**Legislative Committee**  
**Andrew T. Dowd, Chairman**  
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July 20, 2021

**The 192<sup>nd</sup> General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**Joint Committee on Election Laws**

Dear Chairman Finegold, Chairman Ryan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide input. Town Clerks and Election Officials are on the front lines of the election process. We are providing these recommendations in order to assist you with the development of new strategies for running elections as we continue to improve voter access.

We offer recommendations that are in line with the spirit of Senate 459, which is to permanently expand voting options in Massachusetts. Keeping with that spirit, we caution against the desire to simply expand voting options which may be counter intuitive. Promoting limited and clear voting opportunities will help further reduce voter confusion. Our suggestions further provide flexibility as we assess the unique needs of our individual communities.

We hope that the committee will take swift action so the Secretary of the Commonwealth, local clerks and voters have the time necessary to prepare and select their voting option that will ensure success in 2022 and beyond. We continue to offer our support and welcome any opportunities to further assist you with this important work.

Best regards,

*Andrew T. Dowd*

Andrew Dowd,  
MTCA Legislative Chair

*Danielle M. Sicard*

Danielle M. Sicard  
MTCA Early Voting Task Force Representative

## **MTCA recommendations for permanent changes to election laws**

1. To make Early Vote-By-Mail permanent – voters expect and deserve to have this option remain post-pandemic. Voters should be required to make application for a ballot or have access to an enhanced online request portal managed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth.
2. Early Voting In-Person – once Vote-By-Mail is made permanent, the need for long periods of labor intensive in-person voting is reduced, therefore, we recommend:
  - a. 5 days In-Person EV for a Primary (Most communities saw single digit turnout numbers)
  - b. 7 days In-Person EV a General
  - c. Local option for municipal elections
3. Last day to Register remain at 20 days prior to election day. It is important to maintain this deadline so that it falls prior to the start of in-person early voting. Having a deadline during in-person early voting is problematic as our voter list changes daily.
4. Election Day Registration – this provides a safety net for those that miss the deadline and is more manageable for election officials. It will be vitally important that appropriate safeguards are implemented by the Secretary of the Commonwealth.
5. Early Removal and Depositing of mailed ballots – this provision is crucial to allow election officials to manage the high volume of mail-in ballots.
6. Fix the date of the fall primary – having the primary in late August would allow election officials to better plan. Having the date fluctuate is challenging to manage and makes securing polling locations difficult, and often coincides with the start of the school year.

## **Top 3 amendments needed to proposed Votes Act**

- Remove the required postcard mailing by the Secretary of State – this is a labor intensive process, which also caused duplicate requests and voter confusion. We'd recommend developing an on line request portal to augment the existing mail-in ballot request form.
- Reduce the in-person Early Voting period – our statistics have shown very low turnout numbers for primaries and moderate numbers for general elections. Permanent vote-by-mail will further reduce the need for in-person early voting sessions.
- Adopt Election Day Registration and maintain the existing voter registration deadline – this provides a safeguard for those who miss the deadline and will be more secure and easier to manage.