



Office of  
the Mayor

March 26, 2020

Governor Evers, Senator Fitzgerald and Representative Vos,

Over the weekend, you received a letter from the League of Wisconsin Municipalities co-signed by more than 300 local leaders from across the state, urgently asking you to offer us options around voting in the middle of a pandemic. In fact, I helped write it -- that's how strongly I feel about the issue. I have attached that letter.

To quote: "Please take action now to reduce the risk of our residents, members of our staff and our election workers, and to avoid unnecessary disenfranchisement of voters."

Four days later, I have seen no response, and there remains no unified action at the state level. That is a failure of leadership, and, to me, a willful choice to not respond to those who are focused on delivering this election safely and fairly as you read this.

Instead, as this election moves to chaos, you offer us hand sanitizer and well wishes.

Because of your inaction, as well as the Wisconsin Elections Commission, local counties and communities have reacted exactly the way I thought they would: pursuing their own fixes to try and keep the public and workers safe. Some have closed early voting entirely. Some are limiting hours. Some are offering it via drive-through, or by appointment. Some are asking everyone to potentially misrepresent their situation to get around the ID requirement. Some are filing lawsuits, seeking even more dramatic solutions -- changing the date of the election, and more.

I applaud my colleagues for trying something. Changes are needed, but they must be statewide solutions, not a patchwork of fixes.

Because I hate it when people complain and don't offer a solution, here is mine: suspend in-person absentee voting and the April 7 Election Day, relax the ID requirement so people can more easily request a ballot, and do an all-mail election.

But, again, it's not about what I think. **It's about delivering a unified approach to this election that balances safety of our poll workers and the public, with the need to protect the integrity of the vote and not disenfranchise voters.**

I noticed the "Safer at Home" order does not address elections at all, as a prohibited or permitted activity. I ask myself why -- and hope that means the state is poised to make a ruling that will give us the clarity and tools we need. I hope so. The clock is ticking.



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Meanwhile, the South Milwaukee Clerk's office continues to step up. We are continuing in-person absentee voting, with social distancing and other measures in place, and using other city workers to help process absentee ballot requests. We are also making plans for April 7, expecting to redeploy city workers to cover for the (understandably) huge attrition we've seen from our poll workers. And – it's come to this! – we are working with a local company to have Plexiglas barriers built to separate our poll workers from the public on Election Day, as an added safety measure.

Please step up for our poll workers, and our voters. As of today, more than 70% of registered South Milwaukee voters do not have a ballot in their hand. That is more than 7,000 people. Do right by them, and us.

In health,

Erik Brooks  
Mayor, City of South Milwaukee

EB/jp

Cc: Senator Chris Larson, Representative Jessie Rodriguez