



SeniorLAW Center

Protecting the Rights of Older Pennsylvanians

SeniorLAW Center and groups representing diverse voters seek a mail-in ballot deadline extension due to COVID-19 to avoid disenfranchising voters.

SeniorLAW Center has a proud history of protecting the right to vote of older people, which is integral to its mission. To that end, SeniorLAW Center has joined a group of plaintiffs in filing suit in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to protect the rights of older Pennsylvanians and others who are in danger of being disenfranchised under current deadline rules which require mail-in ballots be received by Election Day regardless of when they were sent. *DRP et al. v. Boockvar*. We are proud to join the Barristers' Association of Philadelphia, Disability Rights PA, and SEAMAAC as parties, and extremely grateful for the efforts and expertise of our attorneys Public Interest Law Center and pro bono partner Arnold & Porter.

Older citizens historically represent one of the largest voting demographics, known as "supervoters" for voting in every election. Many of our older voters were the original advocates of voting rights, civil rights and equal rights. But they are also the population hardest hit by COVID-19. 80 percent of the deaths from COVID-19 have been Americans over age 65. Three million Pennsylvanians are over the age of 60. Older Pennsylvanians should not be forced to choose between their health and their constitutional right to vote.

Pennsylvania's new vote by mail rules, which allows all eligible voters to vote by mail, is available for the first time this year through Pennsylvania's Act 77. But none of us envisioned a pandemic which would affect every aspect of life, including voting. The crisis is likely to create a tremendous backlog in county boards of elections and the postal service. Already close to one million Pennsylvania voters have requested a mailin or absentee ballot for the June 2nd primary election. Stay-at-home orders and social distancing have kept us isolated. Public transportation has been severely limited. Most importantly, the virus poses profound health and safety risks for vulnerable people, especially older people and those with underlying health conditions.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit seek a reasonable extension of time to allow all Pennsylvania mail-in and absentee ballots to be counted. Current law requires all

ballots to arrive on Election Day, no matter when they are mailed. We believe and the litigation seeks to extend that timeframe. Ballots which are sent or postmarked by Election Day and received within seven days should be counted during this public health emergency.

Changing this date could result in thousands of voters having their ballots counted. Older Pennsylvanians should not be forced to choose between their health and safety and their constitutional right to vote. None of us should. They and all of us deserve to know that they can vote safely from home and have their vote count.

SeniorLAW Center was founded in 1978 and has served more than 400,000 older people in all 67 counties of Pennsylvania -- diverse seniors of all walks of life, party affiliation, orientation, culture, race, and language. We have advocated for older people locally, regionally and nationally on life's most crucial issues. Voting is one that we as Americans hold most dear. We are proud to be a voice and an advocate for older people.

For more information, contact Karen C. Buck, Executive Director, 215-701-3201
kbuck@seniorlawcenter.org. www.seniorlawcenter.org