



DENISE W. MERRILL
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

August 9, 2020

Governor Ned Lamont
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Governor Lamont,

I am writing to request an executive order that will ensure that every voter who wants to cast their ballot in Tuesday's primary election is able to do so. In addition to the global pandemic without precedent in the last century, the State of Connecticut has just experienced one of the worst storms in our history. Almost every town faced outages, including many town halls that house the offices of town clerks and registrars of voters and polling locations. Although my office, along with your office and PURA, has been in close contact with the power companies and telecommunications companies to impress upon them the importance of getting these critical election infrastructure locations up and running as soon as possible, many have been without power since the storm and for all or most of this weekend, and as of this writing some still are without power or connectivity. Most people consider election day to take place between 6:00am and 8:00pm on a certain Tuesday, but state and local election officials know that days of hard work go into preparing for that Tuesday, and that work has been hampered this weekend by power outages in many parts of the state.

Given the devastating aftermath of Tropical Storm Isaias, this proposed executive order has become critical to ensure that every voter can exercise their right to vote. Many post offices lost power potentially delaying ballots that remain in the post office chain. Roads and bridges were closed for several days and access to town halls still remain a problem, as does power and connectivity at some town halls.

To that end, I am requesting that you use your emergency powers to issue an executive order that helps voters cast their ballots in light of the storm and the power outages. The executive order would cover four important aspects:

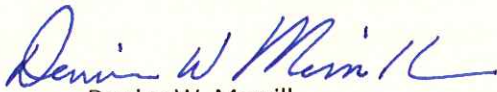
1. It would allow town clerks and absentee ballot counters to count any absentee ballot postmarked by August 11, 2020 so long as it is received by the town clerk by August 13, 2020;
2. It would clarify that anyone who fears COVID can complete and vote by absentee ballot and that the inner envelope' illness excuse was meant to cover this exception;

3. It would clarify that the town clerks may open the outer blank envelope to access the voter information on the inner envelope, but that the inner envelope shall remain sealed until election day.

Allowing voters who postmarked their ballots by Election Day an extra two days to have their ballot arrive could mean the difference between being able to vote or being left out of the democratic process. Although this will put some strain on local election officials depending on how many ballots are received in this manner, it will also allow some voters to have their vote counted when they might not otherwise have been able to due to the tropical storm and subsequent power outages.

For these reasons, I am requesting this voter-centric executive order.

Sincerely,



Denise W. Merrill

Connecticut Secretary of the State