

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3961

To require States and local jurisdictions to allow absentee voting in the November 2020 general election for Federal office for individuals impacted by coronavirus disease 2019, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 15, 2020

Mr. MERKLEY introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration

A BILL

To require States and local jurisdictions to allow absentee voting in the November 2020 general election for Federal office for individuals impacted by coronavirus disease 2019, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Pandemic Democracy
5 for All Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE ABSENTEE BALLOTS**
2 **FOR 2020 ELECTIONS TO INDIVIDUALS IM-**
3 **PACTED BY COVID-19.**

4 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—In the case of the regularly sched-
5 uled general election for Federal office occurring in No-
6 vember 2020, each State and local jurisdiction shall per-
7 mit eligible voters to use absentee registration procedures
8 and to vote by absentee ballot individuals if such eligible
9 voter has a reasonable concern that voting in person on
10 the day of the election may expose the voter to contracting
11 coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) or is otherwise im-
12 pacted by COVID-19.

13 (b) **ENFORCEMENT.**—The Attorney General may
14 bring a civil action against any State or local jurisdiction
15 in an appropriate United States District Court for such
16 declaratory and injunctive relief (including a temporary
17 restraining order, a permanent or temporary injunction,
18 or other order) as may be necessary to carry out the pur-
19 poses of subsection (a).

20 **SEC. 3. GRANTS FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION SYSTEMS.**

21 (a) **PURPOSE.**—The purpose of this section is to en-
22 courage State and local jurisdictions with paper-based ab-
23 sentee ballot request systems to provide for online absen-
24 tee ballot request systems.

25 (b) **GRANTS.**—The Election Assistance Commission
26 may award grants to States and local jurisdictions to en-

1 able States and local jurisdictions to implement online ab-
2 sentee registration systems for the regularly scheduled
3 election for Federal office in November 2020.

4 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
5 are authorized to be appropriated for payments under this
6 section \$16,700,000 for fiscal year 2020.

7 **SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR INCREASED ABSENTEE VOTING.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Election Assistance Commis-
9 sion may award grants to States and local jurisdictions
10 to facilitate an increase in absentee voting during the reg-
11 ularly scheduled election for Federal office in November
12 2020.

13 (b) USE OF GRANTS.—Grants provided under this
14 section may be used for—

15 (1) the purchase of materials (including the
16 costs of postage, envelopes, ballot printing, drop
17 boxes, and processing equipment) to facilitate absen-
18 tee voting;

19 (2) educational outreach to the public with re-
20 spect to casting absentee ballots and the amount of
21 time it will take to process such ballots and certify
22 election results; and

23 (3) such other purposes as the Commission may
24 determine appropriate.

1 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
2 are authorized to be appropriated for payments under this
3 section \$700,000,000 for fiscal year 2020, of which not
4 less than \$200,000,000 shall be authorized for grants
5 used for purposes described in subsection (b)(2).

6 **SEC. 5. STATE DEFINED.**

7 In this Act, the term “State” means the 50 States
8 and the District of Columbia.

○