

**PROTECTING AMERICA'S DEMOCRACY: ENSURING
EVERY VOTE COUNTS**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
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Friday, August 28, 2020

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 12:08 p.m., via Webex, Hon. Bennie G. Thompson (Chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Thompson, Richmond, Payne, Rice, Correa, Torres Small, Rose, Underwood, Slotkin, Cleaver, Clarke, Titus, Watson Coleman, Barragán, Demings, Rogers, Katko, Lesko, Joyce, Bishop, and Garcia.

Chairman THOMPSON. The Committee on Homeland Security will come to order. Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare the committee in recess at any point.

Good afternoon. Before I begin today, I want to extend my deepest sympathies to those who have been affected by the California wildfires and Hurricane Laura. Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast 15 years ago this week. The storm caused terrific damage and upended people's lives, but through perseverance, hard work, and unyielding oversight of the Federal disaster response apparatus, we built back better.

As the residents of communities affected by Hurricane Laura assess the damage to their homes, they can rest assured that the committee will hold the Federal Emergency Management Agency and its Federal partners accountable by making sure they provide the help communities need to get back on their feet.

A key lesson from Hurricane Katrina is that the initial response was hampered by the inept leadership of an inexperienced, unqualified Presidential campaign donor who had been appointed to head FEMA, the Nation's emergency manager. The hurricane served as an important reminder that Federal agencies should be led by experienced people committed to the mission, especially in times of crisis.

Today, the country is in crisis once again, and inept leadership is stalling the Nation's response. A global pandemic has crippled the Nation since March, dramatically changing how Americans live and work and keeping hundreds of thousands of children out of school. Hurricanes continue to batter coastal communities and wildfires are ravaging the West Coast. In the midst of all of this, a Presidential election is rapidly approaching.

During this time of crisis, Americans are depending on the Postal Service to deliver life-saving prescriptions, essential goods and, importantly, the election ballots. The President, however, is waging

an attack on the Postal Service to serve his own political interests. For instance, the President has told the public that vote by mail is rigged, illegal, or fraudulent, over 100 times since March, undeterred by the fact that he has been contradicted by DHS and the intelligence community.

The administration has refused to provide funding to the Postal Service's needs to ensure it can continue to deliver for this Nation over the long term. The President has openly acknowledged that he is depriving the Postal Service of additional funding because he is concerned that expanding voting opportunities will hurt reelection chances.

To make matters worse, the Postal Service is now being led by a Presidential campaign donor who does not even know how much it costs to mail a postcard. The Postmaster General implemented sweeping operational changes, and the Postal Service's own internal documents even confirm these changes have slowed mail service across this country this summer. These changes could slow the delivery of ballots during the fall elections just as millions of Americans are choosing to vote by mail for the first time to avoid possible exposure to COVID-19.

Although the Postmaster General has since paused his restructuring plan, he has refused to roll back changes that have already been implemented. It is time for the Postmaster General to demonstrate to the American people that he is committed to the mission and fit for the challenges ahead and that the Postal Service will do whatever it takes to get election mail delivered on time. We cannot afford to have another heck-of-a-job moment.

More than that, the President must stop peddling disinformation that could suppress voter participation and undermine confidence in election results. It sets a bad tone.

Just yesterday, Michigan's secretary of state, who is testifying before us today, alerted voters to a racially-charged robocall using lies to discourage minority voters from voting by mail. This must stop. We cannot allow disinformation to divide Americans and destroy our democracy.

At the same time, people who prefer to vote in person must have the opportunity to do so safely and securely. That means, among other things, there must be enough polling places that are easily accessible to all voters, particularly low-income voters who are less able to travel long distances to polling places. No one should be disenfranchised because it is too hard to get to a polling place or because the line is too long.

Before I close, I want to note that the House passed the HEROES Act in May and the Delivering for America Act last week. Both are essential to our elections this November, and I urge the Senate to act on them.

[The statement of Chairman Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BENNIE G. THOMPSON

AUGUST 28, 2020

Before I begin today, I want to extend my deepest sympathies to those who have been affected by the California wildfires and Hurricane Laura. Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast 15 years ago this week. The storm caused horrific damage

and upended people's lives. But through perseverance, hard work, and unyielding oversight of the Federal disaster response apparatus, we built back better.

As the residents of communities affected by Hurricane Laura assess the damage to their homes, they can rest assured that this committee will hold the Federal Emergency Management Agency and its Federal partners accountable by making sure they provide the help communities need to get back on their feet. A key lesson from Hurricane Katrina is that the initial response was hampered by the inept leadership of an inexperienced, unqualified Presidential campaign donor who had been appointed to head FEMA, the Nation's emergency manager. The Hurricane served as an important reminder that Federal agencies should be led by experienced people—committed to the mission—especially in times of crisis.

Today, the country is in crisis once again, and inept leadership is stalling the Nation's response.

A global pandemic has crippled the Nation since March, dramatically changing how Americans live and work and keeping hundreds of thousands of children out of school. Hurricanes continue to batter coastal communities and wildfires are ravaging the West Coast. In the midst of all this, a Presidential election is rapidly approaching.

During this time of crisis, Americans are depending on the Postal Service to deliver life-saving prescriptions, essential goods, and importantly, their election ballots. The President, however, is waging an attack on the Postal Service to serve his own political interests. For instance, the President has told the public that vote by mail is rigged, illegal, or fraudulent over 100 times since March, undeterred by the fact that he has been contradicted by DHS and the intelligence community.

The administration has refused to provide funding the Postal Service needs to ensure it can continue to deliver for this Nation over the long term. The President has openly acknowledged that he is depriving the Postal Service of additional funding because he is concerned that expanding voting opportunities will hurt his re-election chances. To make matters worse, the Postal Service is now being led by a Presidential campaign donor who does not even know how much it costs to mail a postcard.

The Postmaster General implemented sweeping operational changes, and the Postal Service's own internal documents confirm these changes have slowed mail service across the country this summer. These changes could slow the delivery of ballots during this fall's election—just as millions of Americans are choosing to vote by mail for the first time to avoid possible exposure to COVID-19.

Although the Postmaster General has since paused his restructuring plan, he has refused to roll back changes that have already been implemented. It is time for the Postmaster General to demonstrate to the American public that he is committed to the mission and fit for the challenges ahead—and that the Postal Service will do whatever it takes to get election mail delivered on time. We cannot afford to have another "heck of a job" moment. More than that, the President must stop peddling disinformation that could suppress voter participation and undermine confidence in election results. It sets a bad tone.

Just yesterday, Michigan's Secretary of State—who is testifying before us today—alerted voters to a racially charged robocall using lies to discourage minority voters from voting by mail. This must stop. We cannot allow disinformation to divide Americans and destroy our democracy. At the same time, people who prefer to vote in person must have the opportunity to do so safely and securely.

That means, among other things, there must be enough polling places that are easily accessible to all voters, particularly low-income voters who are less able to travel long distances to polling locations. No one should be disenfranchised because it is too hard to get to a polling place or because the line is too long.

Before I close, I want to note that the House passed the HEROES Act in May and the Delivering for America Act last week. Both are essential to our elections this November, and I urge the Senate to act on them.

Chairman THOMPSON. With that, I recognize the gentleman from Alabama, Ranking Member Rogers, for any opening statement he may have.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can you hear me?

Chairman THOMPSON. Yes, I can hear you.

Mr. ROGERS. Great.

First, I want to congratulate Representative Mike Garcia on his election to Congress and his appointment to the Committee on Homeland Security. Prior to Congress, Representative Garcia grad-

uated from the Naval Academy, flew over 30 combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom and was a successful businessman in the private sector. His experiences and wealth of knowledge will surely benefit the committee.

Thank you for your continued service to our Nation, Mr. Garcia.

Mr. Chairman, I admit I am disappointed that we are holding this hearing today. Lately, this committee has had a tendency to hold hearings outside of our jurisdiction, and today is no exception. We have no oversight or legislative role over the United States Postal Service. The committee of jurisdiction held a hearing on this topic earlier this week. The House already rushed through legislation over the weekend, which leaves me wondering what we are doing here today.

We have already held 5 election security hearings delving into issues in our jurisdiction, such as protecting election infrastructure through foreign interference and cybersecurity threats. But based on today's testimony, we won't be talking about actual election security.

It is clear the only reason we are having this hearing is to further the Democrats' crazy postal conspiracy. Despite what the Democrats say, the Postmaster General is not conspiring with the President to suppress the vote. Actions taken to retire sorting machines and reallocate collection boxes were put in place long ago before the current Postmaster General took over. In fact, under the Obama administration, over 12,000 collection boxes were removed and more than 80 mail facilities were closed.

One of the Democrats' favorite games these days is to oppose anything that happens under President Trump, even when President Obama did the same thing. The facts are the Postal Service—the Post Office is more than capable of delivering ballots to voters and returning them to election officials in a timely manner. The problem isn't with the Post Office; it is with the States.

As the Post Office explained in 3 separate letters to State election officials this year, setting unrealistic deadlines for ballot requests and submissions could result in ballots not being delivered in time to be counted.

You can blame the Post Office all you want, but when States like New York mail out over 30,000 ballots the day before the election, not even Superman could deliver them on time.

The fact is there is no perfect way to vote. Each method poses risks for fraud, manipulation, or error; but vote by mail is the least secure method of voting that we have. Vote by mail requires election officials to send ballots to every voter, regardless of whether the voter requested one.

This is a tremendous administrative undertaking, especially for States trying to implement the system before November. It took Washington State nearly 10 years to fully implement the system. One of the biggest challenges is ensuring voting rolls are up to date before the ballots are mailed out. If they are not, live ballots will be sent to individuals who may not be eligible to vote or may even not be alive, for that matter. This is a real problem.

Los Angeles was recently ordered by a court to remove 1.5 million inactive voters from their rolls. Once a vote-by-mail ballot leaves the election officials, nothing is done to ensure it is received

by the right voter, and that is only exacerbated when States allow ballots to be returned to unmonitored drop boxes. With no way to ensure the chain of custody, drop boxes only encourage election fraud and illegal ballot harvesting.

We should also worry about the staggering number of ballots rejected by vote-by-mail elections. In California this year, over 100,000 vote-by-mail ballots were rejected. The *Washington Post* reports that 534,731 ballots were disqualified in 23 States in the 2020 primary season. NPR reports that 558,000 ballots were rejected in 30 States. All of these were vote-by-mail ballots, where everyone worried about making sure that every vote counts. It should scare you.

It should also scare you that many States have procedures in place that enable ballots to be returned well after election day. In New York, it took 6 weeks to certify the primary election results for 2 of our colleagues. In California, it currently takes over a month to certify election results.

How long will it take States to certify results this November? How long will Americans wait to know who their President will be because of vote-by-mail issues? CISA has noted that delayed election results present a prime opportunity to spread disinformation and undermine public confidence in the election.

If Democrats truly want to ensure every vote counts and protect the integrity of our election process, they should end this ridiculous postal conspiracy. They should work with us to encourage States to put in place realistic deadlines for mail-in voting, pass laws to prohibit ballot harvesting, and implement procedures to certify election results quickly and accurately.

Mr. Chairman, it is important that one message leaves this committee today, and that is, every eligible American has the right to vote and responsibly to do so this November.

With that, I thank you and yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Rogers follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER MIKE ROGERS

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I first want to congratulate Representative Mike Garcia on his election to Congress and his appointment to the Committee on Homeland Security.

Prior to Congress, Representative Garcia graduated from the Naval Academy, flew over 30 combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and was a successful businessman in the private sector.

His experiences and wealth of knowledge will surely benefit this committee. Thank you for your continued service to our Nation.

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We should also worry about the staggering number of ballots rejected in vote-by-mail elections.

In California this year, over 100,000 vote-by-mail ballots were rejected.

The *Washington Post* reports that "534,731 ballots were disqualified in 23 States in the 2020 primary season."

NPR reports that "558,032 ballots that were rejected in 30 States."

All of these were vote-by-mail ballots.

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It should also scare you that many States have procedures in place that enable ballots to be returned well after election day.

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If Democrats truly want to ensure every vote counts and protect the integrity of our election process, they should end this ridiculous postal conspiracy.

They should work with us to encourage States to—

- put in place realistic deadlines for mail-in voting;
- pass laws to prohibit ballot harvesting; and
- implement procedures to certify election results quickly and accurately.

Mr. Chairman, it's important that one message leaves this committee today.

And that is: Every eligible American has the right to vote and a responsibility to do so this November.

I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. I thank the Ranking Member.

I will remind you that the committee will operate according to the guidelines laid out by the Chairman and Ranking Member in our July 8 colloquy.

I now welcome our panel of witnesses. First, I would like to welcome Ms. Jocelyn Benson, who is Michigan's 43rd secretary of state.

Now, if Ms. Slotkin is on this meeting call——

Ms. SLOTKIN. I am here, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman THOMPSON [continuing]. I would like to recognize the gentlelady from Michigan for the introduction.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have the real pleasure of introducing my friend and fierce champion for Michigan's voters, Michigan secretary of state, Jocelyn Benson. Secretary Benson was sworn in as our 43rd secretary of state in January 2019, and she has really worked tirelessly since then to protect Michiganders' right to vote and the integrity of our elections.

She is a Marshall Scholar and graduate of Harvard Law, an expert on civil rights law and election law specifically. Secretary Benson served as the dean of the Wayne State University Law School in Detroit where she was appointed at the age of 36, the youngest woman in history to lead a top 100 accredited law school.

Secretary Benson has spent her career working to protect voting rights and election integrity. This dates back to her work advocating for the passage of Help America Vote Act. She was an investigative journalist and worked with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

She is also the cofounder of the Military Spouses of Michigan, a network dedicated to providing support and services for military spouses and their children. Secretary Benson is intimately familiar with this because she is a military spouse herself and something that I hope that she'll address today. In 2012, when her husband was serving in Afghanistan, he had his own absentee ballot returned undeliverable.

So I am thrilled that Secretary Benson is here to share her expertise and her experience overseeing Michigan's elections with the committee and look forward to her testimony.

Thanks so much.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We also have Mark Dimondstein, who has been the president of the American Postal Workers Union since 2013. APW represents more than 200,000 Postal Service employees and about 1,500 employees in the private-sector mail industry.

Next, we will hear from Ms. Tammy Patrick, a senior advisor to the elections program at Democracy Fund. There she leads an effort to foster voter-centric election systems and provide election officials with the tools and knowledge they need to best serve their voters.

Finally, we will have Michael Adams, the 77th secretary of state from the State of Kentucky. I appreciate you joining us today.

Without objection, the witnesses' full statements will be inserted in the record.

I now ask each witness to summarize his or her statement for 5 minutes, beginning with Secretary Benson.

**STATEMENT OF JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE,
STATE OF MICHIGAN**

Ms. BENSON. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Congresswoman Slotkin, for your very kind introduction.

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee on Homeland Security, thank you for inviting me here today.

Democracy is a team sport, and every single one of us here can agree that we want this fall election to be successful. We want to vote, and we want our votes to be fully and equally accessible to every voter. We want the system to be secure and protected against any threats, foreign and domestic, and we want every citizen to have full faith that the election results are a complete and accurate reflection of the will of the people.

The coronavirus pandemic, along with what seems to be near-constant and escalating rhetoric and misinformation about our elections, has brought historic pressures on our ability in the States to meet this goal. In fact, just yesterday, as was mentioned, my office had to correct an unconscionable attempt to suppress voting through a robocall targeting voters in the city of Detroit that falsely threatened that voting by mail would put voters' personal information at risk with creditors, law enforcement, and health agencies.

But meet the challenge ahead of us we must, and there are solutions to ensure that we can. I am here today to talk about those solutions and to emphasize that your partnership and the partnership of the U.S. Postal Service is an important part of ensuring that success.

Now, earlier this month, we held a State-wide primary in Michigan, which serves the blueprint for running safe, secure, accessible elections in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We learned that first it is very clear that even in the midst of a global pandemic, people want to vote. More than 2.5 million Michigan citizens voted in our August primary, and that is the highest turnout that we have ever had for an August primary in our State.

Next, citizens need to have a clear, reliable, and safe option to vote early, whether in person or by mail. In Michigan, more than 1.6 million citizens voted prior to election day. Now, importantly, this amount surpassed our State's previous record of nearly 1.3 million voters voting by mail or prior to election day which was set in the 2016 general election. This dramatic increase underscores the importance of expanding absentee and early voting options to all citizens and ensuring they know exactly how to exercise those options.

Finally, voters must have the choice to vote in person on election day without risking their health. Throughout our State, traditional polling places remained open for our August primary. We did no consolidations, and this will similarly be the case for November 3. Each precinct was staffed by many of the new election workers we recruited and trained State-wide, which to date has recruited close to 10,000 new election workers. Our polling places were clean, calm, accessible, and sanitized repeatedly throughout the day. Lines were short or nonexistent. Social distancing guidelines eliminated the possibility of crowding, and election workers made good use of the PPE and cleaning supplies that were bought with Fed-

eral CARES Act funds and provided to every local jurisdiction in our State.

So our primary success demonstrated that proactive, data-driven planning, and collaboration at the State and local levels, supported by Federal resources, can result in successful elections this year. This is a good sign for November.

However, the emerging challenges in efficient postal delivery with the United States Postal Service have created enormous uncertainties for citizens in our State who seek to utilize an otherwise safe, secure, and reliable method to vote absentee.

In Michigan, we are going to do our part as partners in this effort. For example, earlier this year, we prioritized coordination and communication with our State Postal Service leadership. This led to numerous operational improvements for us and for them, a true partnership. For example, we redesigned our ballot envelopes to better move through the system as quickly as possible and reduce errors. We are also placing close to 1,000 secure monitored ballot drop boxes with clear procedures and protections in place regarding chain of custody of ballots throughout the State for voters to utilize to return their ballots.

But at a time when record number of citizens want to vote and want to vote by mail, nothing can truly replace the full utility of a functioning Postal Service. So we hope the Federal Government prioritizes fixing these issues or we face potentially significant challenges come November.

Again, you know, to us, this is—we are all in this together. Democracy is a team sport, and what our data and what our experience in Michigan shows, that if we can put partisanship aside and just work together to succeed in holding elections that are secure, accessible, and on schedule, if we fight back against misinformation and speak the truth to our voters, it is possible, it is doable to run these elections securely and safely in November. Our voters, of course, should demand no less from all of us.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Benson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOCELYN BENSON

AUGUST 28, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Thompson, and thank you Members of the Committee on Homeland Security for inviting me here to speak today.

Democracy is a team sport. Every single one of us here today can agree that we want this fall's election to be successful. We want the vote to be fully and equally accessible to every voter, we want the system to be secure and protected against any threats, foreign or domestic, and we want every citizen to have full faith that the election results are a complete and accurate reflection of the will of the people.

Between a global pandemic and what seems near constant and escalating rhetoric and misinformation about our elections, 2020 has brought historic pressures on our ability to meet this goal. But meet this goal we must, and solutions are there to ensure that we do. I am here today to talk about those solutions, and to emphasize that your partnership—and the partnership of the entire Federal Government—is an important part of ensuring that success.

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL ELECTION DURING A PANDEMIC: LESSONS LEARNED FROM MICHIGAN'S AUGUST PRIMARY

Earlier this month we held a State-wide primary in Michigan which served as a blueprint for running safe, secure, accessible elections during the COVID-19 pan-

demic while also highlighting critical needs that, if addressed, can put every State on a path toward successful November elections.

First, it's clear that even in the midst of a global pandemic, citizens want to vote. More than 2.5 million Michigan citizens voted in our August primary, which—despite the absence of any contested State-wide or other high-profile races—was more people than ever before in any August primary in our State's history.

Next, citizens need to have a clear, reliable, and safe option to vote early—whether in person or by mail. In Michigan, record numbers of citizens chose to vote prior to election day, with more than 1.6 million citizens requesting their ballots early and returning them either through the mail or in person at their clerk's office prior to election day. Importantly, this amount surpassed our State's previous record of nearly 1.3 million set in the 2016 general election. The dramatic increase underscores the importance of expanding of absentee and early voting options to all citizens, and ensuring they know about how to exercise those options.

In May, my decision to send every registered voter a paper application to request to have their ballot mailed to them prior to election day, along with the launch of a secure on-line portal for citizens to request to receive their ballots through the mail, were critical to educating voters about how to vote safely and remotely during a pandemic. Once received voters could return ballots through the mail, at one of our new secure drop boxes across the State, or in-person with their local clerk. While this drew inaccurate and inappropriate criticism from the President, at less than a dollar per voter, it was an extremely cost-effective way to inform voters of their right and ability to vote safely during the pandemic, and had the secondary benefit of serving as a State-wide mailing to improve the accuracy of our voter rolls. We are now sending reminder postcards to active voters who have still not applied to vote absentee, and have implemented a State-wide system to enable every voter to track their ballot to give them the confidence that it was received on time. The time-tested security provision in place of signature verification will continue to ensure we protect the system against any attempts of fraud. I must note, however, that mail-voting fraud is exceedingly rare. According to the Heritage Foundation's own database on average in each State it occurs only once every 6 years. As millions of ballots are cast by mail every election cycle, this means that the incidence of mail-voting fraud is infinitesimal. There is simply no evidence suggesting that it will be any different this year.

Finally, voters also need to be able to have the choice to vote in person on election day without risking their health. Throughout our State traditional polling places remained open for our August primary, staffed by many of the new election workers we recruited and trained through our State-wide Democracy MVP program—which to date has recruited close to 10,000 new election workers. The locations were clean, calm, accessible, and sanitized repeatedly throughout the day. Lines were short or nonexistent, social distancing guidelines eliminated the possibility of crowding, and election workers made good use of the personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies bought with Federal CARES Act funds and provided to every jurisdiction by the State. Importantly, we even had election workers on standby to be able to account for no-shows or last-minute cancellations and provide new volunteers to ensure every jurisdiction was staffed.

Our primary election demonstrated that proactive, data-driven planning and tireless work by State and local election officials, supported by Federal resources, results in elections that are safe, secure, accessible, and on schedule. This is a good sign for November, and our experiences this year have also underscored needed adjustments that must take place at the local, State, and National level in the next 3 months to fully prepare for every contingency.

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL ELECTION DURING A PANDEMIC: THE PLAN FOR NOVEMBER

We've now experienced first-hand why we must enact State policies that are in place in at least 18 other States, but not in Michigan, that allow clerks to begin the processing of absentee ballots prior to election day. Election workers should begin election day counting ballots instead of unnecessarily spending hours opening envelopes and preparing ballots for tabulators. This enables more efficient reporting of election results and avoids unnecessary human error.

Our experience also underscores the critical need of recruiting and training a large number of new election workers to deploy in November. Partnerships with local businesses, large employers, and sports teams, coupled with an aggressive State-wide recruiting effort, enabled us to fill vacancies leading up to and on election day itself, ensuring sufficient personnel to open precincts and staff absent-voter-ballot counting boards.

Earlier this year, we prioritized coordination and communication with our State Postal Service leadership. This led to numerous operational improvements on both sides, a true partnership. For example, our Bureau of Elections redesigned our ballot envelopes to better align with USPS standards. This enables ballots to go as quickly as possible through USPS systems, and has reduced the incidence of ballots going undelivered and being returned to voters. The new design also more clearly shows where voters must sign the envelope—a critical security measure of absentee voting—reducing the potential for voter error leading to ballot rejection.

Now, the emerging challenges in efficient postal delivery with the United States Postal Service, exacerbated by a recent reduction in overtime allowances and other changes, have created enormous uncertainties for citizens seeking to utilize an otherwise safe, secure, and reliable method to vote absentee. Like other States, Michigan has invested significant time and resources into adjusting its election infrastructure because it believes, and continues to believe, these changes will strengthen its partnership with the Postal Service in improving the voting experience for all Michiganders. It is critical that this partnership continue.

In Michigan we're planning for every contingency, including purchasing and placing close to 1,000 secure ballot drop boxes throughout the State for voters to utilize. We are also pushing for policies to ensure valid ballots postmarked by election day and received within a reasonable time will still count, ensuring that voters are not penalized for failures in Federal leadership. (Notably, in our August primary, at least 6,400 mailed ballots were received in the days following election day and therefore were unable to be counted. We anticipate this number could at least double if changes are not made prior to November). At this point nothing can truly replace the utility of a fully functioning Postal Service. The Federal Government must prioritize fixing these issues or face a potentially significant election crisis come November.

In fact, every need for November can be met with Federal investment and support. The Federal CARES Act funding was an important down payment on preparing our democracy for November that every State in the country has embraced and utilized. But it wasn't enough. Congress needs to act swiftly, not only to fully fund our Postal Service, but to provide needed additional funds to States as we continue to prepare for record breaking voter turnout this November.

Again, democracy is a team sport. If we work together we can succeed in holding elections this fall that are secure, on schedule, and an accurate reflection of the will of the people. It's possible, it's doable, and our voters should demand no less from their government.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much for your testimony.

I now recognize Mr. Dimondstein to summarize his statement for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MARK DIMONDSTEIN, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. Good afternoon, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the committee. My name is Mark Dimondstein, and I am the president of the American Postal Workers Union. Our union represents about 200,000 of the 630,000 dedicated postal employees who work to serve every community in the country each day. I thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective in the role of the public Postal Service in ensuring that every vote counts.

In this challenging time of the pandemic, our very right to vote depends on millions of people. Our access to the ballot box will depend on vote by mail. Yet there has been a two-prong assault on absentee/vote-by-mail voting, and they are one and the same.

First is the unfounded argument that the service does not have the capacity to deliver mail-in ballots during this election season. Postal workers are up to the task, and the Postal Service has ample resources to safely and securely accept and deliver every mail ballot it receives, provided the States who run the elections

do their very challenging jobs and extra challenging during this pandemic.

Postal workers have proudly facilitated mail-in voting since the Civil War. We also know that the increase of mail ballots expected can be easily handled even if all 150 million voters in the country receive and return their ballots by mail. On a daily basis, postal workers collect, sort, and deliver almost 500 million pieces of mail. During a typical holiday season, we handle as many as 3 billion, with a B, cards and letters in a week. National mailings like the recent CDC coronavirus guidelines are routinely processed and delivered without concern.

Second is the charge that vote by mail is fraudulent. Vote by mail has proven to be an incredibly safe and secure method of voting. More than 5 States conduct their elections entirely by mail. Since 2000, more than 250 million votes have been cast by mail. In Oregon's 19 years of conducting all-mail elections, more than a hundred million votes have been cast by mail with only 15 cases of voter fraud, less than 1 per year.

Claims that vote by mail is rife with fraud are not only simply false, they are also an offense to postal workers who take our oath of office and our commitment to preserve the sanctity of the mail seriously. It is in our DNA to treat the mail like it is our own, and handling election mail properly is even more of a sacred obligation with postal workers.

While we have certainly had our differences in his short tenure with the Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, last week, he did commit to investing resources to ensure vote by mail's success and has thus rejected the voter suppression tactics of some of the vote by mail's most vocal critics,

Our union will hold the Postmaster General to his words. We, along with the other postal unions, will participate in a joint task force with management to ensure our members' expertise is central to the Postal Service's plans for ensuring that every ballot we receive is delivered safely, securely, and in a timely manner.

In recent weeks, much attention has been shone on the Postmaster General's policies, which have slowed down the mail. Our union has been amongst the most vocal critics of these changes. Just this week, we led hundreds of demonstrations across the country, demanding that the PMG's service cuts and delay causing policies be reversed and that Congress pass the emergency COVID-related funding request made by the bipartisan Postal Board of Governors.

We will continue to press, on a nonpartisan basis, the Postal Service and Congress to ensure that the country receives the quality and speedy service it deserves and not just during the election season and not just for the vitally important ballots of election mail.

But with respect specifically to mail-in voting, our message to the many millions of voters who will rely on the Postal Service this year to access the ballot box is simple: Request your ballot early and return it quickly. We have the capacity and the commitment to get your ballot where it belongs. If voters find themselves short of the time frames it takes to get the ballot returned through the

mail, many States have the important option of dropping the mail ballot at secure election drop boxes.

With that, I thank you for the opportunity to share postal workers' commitments to the democratic process with you, and I look forward to any questions at the appropriate time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dimondstein follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARK DIMONDSTEIN

AUGUST 28, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the committee. My name is Mark Dimondstein, and I am the president of the American Postal Workers Union. Our union represents 200,000 of the 630,000 dedicated postal workers who work to serve every community in the country each day. Thank you for the opportunity to share our union's perspective.

In this challenging time of the pandemic, our very right to vote, to access to the ballot box, will depend on vote by mail.

Yet, there has been a two-pronged assault on absentee voting, i.e. vote by mail.

First is the unfounded argument that the Service does not have the capacity to deliver mail-in ballots during this election season. Postal workers are up to the task and the Postal Service has ample resources to safely and securely accept and deliver every mail ballot it receives, provided the States who run the elections do their job.

Postal workers have proudly facilitated mail-in voting since the Civil War. We also know that the increase of mail ballots expected can be easily handled, even if all 150 million voters in the country receive and return their ballot by mail. On a daily basis, postal workers collect, sort, and deliver nearly 500 million pieces of mail. During a typical holiday season, we handle as many as 3 billion cards and letters in a week. National mailings, like the recent CDC coronavirus guidelines, are routinely processed and delivered without concern.

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Claims that vote by mail is rife with fraud are not only simply false, they're also an offense to the postal workers who take our oath of office and our commitment to preserve the sanctity of the mail seriously. It's in our DNA to treat the mail like it's our own, and handling election mail properly is even more of a sacred obligation to postal workers.

While we have certainly had our differences in his short tenure, the Postmaster General last week committed to investing resources to ensure vote by mail's success and has thus rejected the voter suppression tactics of some of vote by mail's most vocal critics.

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We will continue to press the Postal Service and Congress to ensure that the country receives the quality and speedy service it deserves and not just during this election season and not just for vitally important election mail.

But with respect to mail-in-voting in particular, our message to the many millions of voters who will rely on the Postal Service this year to access the ballot box is simple: Request your ballot early and return it quickly. We have the capacity and the commitment to get your ballot where it belongs. If voters find themselves short of the time frames it takes to get a ballot returned through the mail, many States have the important option of dropping the mail ballot at secure election drop boxes.

I thank you for the opportunity to share postal workers' commitments to the democratic process with you, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much for your testimony.

I now recognize Ms. Patrick to summarize her statement for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF TAMMY PATRICK, SENIOR ADVISOR,
ELECTIONS, DEMOCRACY FUND**

Ms. PATRICK. Thank you, Honorable Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the committee for asking me here today to share with you how election officials have been preparing for the upcoming election, the challenges they are facing, and concerns that some of them have over what is happening under the new leadership at the United States Postal Service.

I got into the field of election administration in Arizona almost 20 years ago because I was concerned with what I saw, with what I was hearing. Voters were being told that machines were being hacked, votes flipped, the system was rigged, that fraud was rampant. I was concerned because I saw turnout dwindling, apathy growing, and our democracy slowly slipping away.

In this moment, 4 basic necessities of our democratic process are in need of attention: Funding, acquisition of sufficient polling places, hiring of capable staff and poll workers, and reliable postal delivery, all of which supports secure and resilient elections.

We do not fund our elections properly. A recent study by Auburn University of election center members found that the elections department budgets of their members averaged .54 percent of their county's budget. These are some of the best-resourced offices in the country, and they are barely one-half of 1 percent of the county budget.

Episodic Federal funding does not sufficiently bridge the gap nor stabilize election administration to allow for planned considerations of improvements and modernization. Infusion of Federal funding far too often happens late in the election cycle, thus limiting its effectiveness.

Although attention has shifted focus to carrying out an election in a global pandemic, foreign adversaries have not gone away. We must continue to invest in election security infrastructure, resources, and capacity to build on the progresses made since 2016.

I started my career supervising the recruitment and training of 8,000 poll workers each Federal election in Maricopa County. The county hired hundreds of temporary staff as warehouse personnel, delivery drivers, voter registration clerks, processors of provisional ballots, and many of those positions, just like the poll workers, were retirees. We filled the halls of our tabulation facility with card tables of processing boards to ensure that every eligible ballot was authenticated, processed, counted, and it was never done by election night.

In 2020, those tables will need to be further apart. In 2020, many of those workers will decline to serve. In 2020, we also are not out in the community providing voters with information as we would in a normal election year. Instead, we are more reliant upon social media platforms and reaching voters on-line. This reliance increases the opportunity for misinformation to prevail, to spread, to sow chaos, and to cast doubt on the very legitimacy of our election.

Since the Civil War, as we heard, ballots have been entrusted to mail carriers for safe delivery. Over the past 10 years, we have made great strides in fostering a collaborative relationship between election officials and the Postal Service. And for tens of millions of American voters, their ballot is handed to them, not by a poll worker, but by their postal carrier, and we have seen USPS embrace their role in what I often referred to as delivering democracy. It isn't just another envelope. It is someone's ballot. It is someone's vote.

So we have established protocols, the tracking of election mail throughout the process, the sweeping of plants for ballots and increasing frequency as election day draws near, with nightly all-clears, verifying that all ballots have been processed and are on their way to their final destination. But some of these efforts require overtime and some require late trips, both of which have been called into question lately.

Although the Postmaster General made statements in an effort to clarify the situation in his recent testimony, there is still some confusion amongst postal employees, election officials and, most importantly, voters. Some will say that it is only delayed by 1 day, but in many States, 1 day is a day too late for the ballot to count.

We know that every election there are interruptions of service: Hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, floods. Indeed, 9/11 was an election day in New York City. But we are in a global pandemic and do not know where the next hot spot will be nor when it will hit. Our democracy depends on people, and people can get sick.

Ballots mail out to voters in less than a month. Military and overseas voters' ballots will go out in every State in the Nation on September 19. We don't have much time. The runway is running out.

The American public is tired, frustrated, grieving the loss of more than 180,000 souls. For voters who opt to vote in person, they need to be provided with safe options that do not cause them to have to choose between their health and ability to participate. They need to be assured that, in this moment, it is safe and secure to vote by mail if that is what they choose. In this moment, their voting booth may very well be their kitchen table, their ballot box, their mailbox. In this moment, they need to be reminded that their voices will be heard and their votes counted.

I look forward to answering any questions you might have, and thank you again for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Patrick follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TAMMY PATRICK

AUGUST 28, 2020

SALUTATION

Thank you Honorable Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the committee for asking me here today to share with you how election officials have been preparing for the upcoming election, the challenges they are facing, and the concerns some of them have with what has been happening under the new leadership at the United States Postal Service.

As a bit of background, I was a local official in Maricopa County, Arizona for over a decade and served as a commissioner on President Obama's Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA). I serve as a liaison between the National Association of Election Officials (Election Center) and USPS as a member of the

Postal Service's Mailers Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC), and for years have worked with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) on various risk assessments, election common data formats, the Voluntary Voting Systems Guidelines (VVSG), and most recently cybersecurity frameworks.

After the PCEA's work was completed I moved from Arizona to work in Washington, DC at the Bipartisan Policy Center where I penned the *New Reality in Voting by Mail* in 2016. Since 2017, I have served as a senior advisor to the elections team at Democracy Fund, an independent foundation working to defend American democracy and challenge it to be more open and just. I am also an adjunct professor at the Humphrey School of Public Administration at the University of Minnesota.

INTRODUCTION

We do not properly fund our elections. A recent study by Auburn University of Election Center members found that the election department budget of their members averaged .54 percent of their counties' budgets. These are some of the best-resourced offices in the country and they are barely one-half of 1 percent of their counties' budget. Many jurisdictions were advised earlier in the year to submit budgets with cuts of 10–20 percent due to loss tax revenues in their jurisdictions. Offices have seen salary reductions and furloughs in a time when we have additional workloads and responsibilities.

Episodic Federal funding does not sufficiently bridge the gap nor stabilize election administration to allow for planned considerations of improvements and modernizations. Infusion of funding far too often happens late in the election cycle, thus limiting its effectiveness.

Philanthropy has played a key role in the last decade. Pew's Voting Initiatives brought us programs like the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) now an independent consortium of States, the Voting Information Project (VIP) that gathers official data from the States and aids in its distribution to hundreds of websites now housed at Democracy Works, and the Election Performance Index (EPI) now housed at MIT's Election Data Science Lab (MEDSL). These efforts have helped shape our understanding of election administration and improved policy decisions based on facts and data.

Five years ago Democracy Fund stepped into the void created when Pew left the space. Since 2016 we have funded some of the most successful efforts responding to the security threats to our elections—some of them recently picked up by the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) such as the Center for Internet Security's Non-Voting Election Technology Verification program to provide guidance similar to the VVSG for the tertiary technology not contemplated in the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and training programs for election officials created by the Center for Technology in Civic Life (CTCL) on cybersecurity. CTCL recently expanded their training offerings to include a module on combating election misinformation and communicating trusted election information, an on-going concern for election officials. The Belfer Center's Defending Digital Democracy Program has offered Tabletop Exercises that have been touted as one of the most effective efforts to prepare election officials.

In this moment, when the country is dealing with a global pandemic during a Presidential Election Cycle, business and commerce are also assisting. Anheuser-Busch has launched a Nation-wide effort to supply hand sanitizer to election officials, facilities are opening their doors as polling locations, and businesses are offering employees time off to work the polls. Yet, all of these deficiencies remain problematic in far too many jurisdictions.

In this moment the basic necessities of our democratic process are in need of attention: Acquisition of sufficient polling places, hiring of capable staff and poll workers, reliable postal delivery, and a secure and resilient electoral process. It is also important to note that even as National attention has shifted focus to carrying out an election in the midst of a global pandemic, foreign adversaries have not gone away. We must continue to invest in election security infrastructure, resources, and capacity and build on the progress made since 2016.

IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES: VOTING & ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Election officials all across the country are having difficulty securing polling locations for the upcoming election. I have spoken to election officials who, in the best-case scenario are missing about a fourth of their facilities, and in the worst-case all of their locations have denied them access. Houses of worship have said "If we can't have our services, we can't be a polling location". Schools have said "If we can't teach the children safely, then it isn't safe to be a polling location either". Many officials have told me that even when they can secure a facility many of them are

now requiring a post-election day deep cleaning as a prerequisite, and local election officials are hard pressed for the resources as most of the CARE Act funding was expended in the conduction of the primary elections earlier this year.

Given the Center for Disease Control (CDC) social distancing recommendations some facilities are no longer satisfactory. A growing trend is the use of large polling locations such as arenas and colosseums—many with ample parking and sufficient air circulation to keep voters safe. More curbside-voting and drive-thru, contact-free offerings will be available to voters. We saw some of this in the primary season and it is anticipated that these practices will most likely expand and spread given the on-going growth of the numbers of positive infections and subsequent deaths.

Having a polling location is just the first challenge in a global pandemic, staffing the locations is the second. Traditionally our polls have been staffed by the very individuals who are the most vulnerable to COVID-19. Although every State will offer in-person voting solutions for the November election, they may look differently: New location, new staff, different procedures. Because we will see an increase in poll workers working for the first time, training and support materials will be critical to ensure that policies and procedures are understood and followed.

I started my career in poll worker recruitment. I had a staff of a dozen or so temporary workers who hired around 8,000 workers to staff the 1,142 precincts. The county hired hundreds of workers as field rovers, warehouse personnel and delivery drivers of polling location materials, central boardworkers processing vote by mail applications, and provisional ballots. Many of those positions, just like poll worker positions, were filled by retirees. We filled the halls of our tabulation facility with card tables of processing boards to ensure that every eligible ballot was authenticated, processed, and counted.

In 2020 those tables will need to be further apart.

In 2020 many of those workers will decline to serve.

In 2020 we have seen election officials test positive, spend weeks in the hospital, have their offices quarantined, and even the loss of life for a few. We do not know where the next hotspot will be or where it will hit. We know that election officials working from home and “dialing it in” have to take additional steps to secure their connections, to secure their networks.

In 2020 we do not have Supervisors of Elections in Florida out registering voters at the local festival, we do not have County Auditors in Iowa at the county fair providing voter information, we do not have political parties, candidates, third-party organizations in front of the library providing voters with information on when and where to vote as we would in a normal Presidential election cycle. Instead we are more reliant upon social media platforms and reaching voters on-line. This reliance increases the opportunity for mis- and disinformation to prevail, to spread, to sow chaos, and to cast doubt on the legitimacy of our election.

For this reason, as the General Election nears, it will be critical to ensure that advocates, journalists, and others’ growing interest in discussing election security does not inadvertently dampen voter trust and enthusiasm. If framed correctly, growing attention to election security issues can help create momentum to address security gaps and secure Federal election security funding. Employing the wrong messages, however, can lead voters to lose faith in elections. To understand how election security messages resonate with voters within a rapidly-evolving election security landscape Democracy Fund commissioned research in 2018 resulting in a report titled “How to Talk about Threats to Elections in Ways that Won’t Dampen People’s Desire to Vote” from the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life at the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin. This research revealed that focusing exclusively on election security threats decreases trust, while pairing threats and solutions (or efforts to defend elections), informs the public without decreasing trust. Specifically, reporting on threats to elections alone heightens negative emotions: Reporting on election issues increases anxiety and anger and makes people feel less enthusiastic about politics. In contrast, coverage featuring threats and efforts to address them leads to less negative emotions and an increased sense that elections can be protected.

ACTION ITEMS

Congress

Funding Stream.—Congress needs to establish a steady funding stream for elections to support this critical infrastructure. Although the election is practically upon us, additional funding, even at this late date, can be used to secure additional PPE, cover the costs of additional space for processing and voting, and cover expanded payrolls.

CISA

Continue to provide tools, education, and support for election officials.—CISA has proven to be an essential partner to State and local election officials by providing election officials with a range of tools, education, and support to strengthen the cybersecurity of their election systems. Since CISA began working with election officials and other partners to increase the security and information sharing across election systems and networks, important benchmarks have been reached. Notably, CISA has conducted hundreds of vulnerability assessments, offered on-line cybersecurity training completed by close to 3,000 election officials across the country, and developed tools and resources like their Last Mile and Misinformation resources to improve election official security posture and awareness. A critical contributor to CISA's success has been its ability to build trusted relationships with election officials and others in the space working to improve election cybersecurity.

Continue information-sharing coordinator role.—Another coordinating role that CISA plays in the election community is as an information-sharing hub—CISA monitors, receives, and shares out critical information on cyber threats and incidents to election officials and other key stakeholders. On election day for the 2018 Midterm Election and on 2020's Super Tuesday CISA hosted an unclassified Situation Room at DHS. This gathering of invested stakeholders expedited communications and incident response and was demonstrative of their collaborative approach to securing our elections.

State / Local

Expand EI-ISAC membership.—All 50 States plus the District of Columbia participate in the EI-ISAC, which provides elections officials with regular updates on cyber threats, cyber event analysis, and cyber education materials. While State participation is key, additional tools, outreach, and support targeting local officials is needed for the elections community as a whole to benefit from the critical services provided. For some without a dedicated cybersecurity or IT staff person, the information shared, and actions required can be overwhelming. To meet these needs, an effort is underway to make the messages more consumable and actionable for local officials who may not be as steeped in the more technological aspects of the content.

Expand options for voters.—State and local election officials need to continue their efforts to provide voters with as many safe voting options as they can and ensure that in-person solutions allow for adherence to CDC recommendations while still processing voters in a timely fashion. Restrictions on types of facilities that can be used should be lifted, all government facilities be made available. Number of days, hours, and locations for voting should allow voters sufficient capacity to spread out over both time and distance.

Education Campaigns.—Election officials need the resources to undertake a concerted effort to educate and update voters with what their voting options are in 2020. At this time there are currently more than 200 cases of election litigation in the courts all across the country. Almost every State has a challenge to some aspect of how the General Election is to be conducted, along with State legislatures still seated in a dozen or so States with potential election legislation. Election officials must communicate information so voters are aware of changes and can act early in the process.

Voters

Make a plan to vote.—Voters should verify what their options are, make a plan to vote, and talk to friends and family members about their plans. Ensuring that correct information is being shared is critical.

VOTE BY MAIL

I would like to turn to the other channel of voting, voting by mail or absentee.

Since the Civil War, ballots have been entrusted to mail carriers for safe delivery. Since the late 1980's the State of Oregon has conducted all of their elections by mail. In the 90's, the Postal Service created the Official Election Mail Logo to help identify ballots and voter registration materials in the mail stream. But it was not enough.

Ten years ago, when election officials would have a postal session at our conferences, election administrators from across the country would line up at the microphone to share their stories of poor communication: Phone calls that went unanswered, emails that were never returned, questionable customer service.

However, in the ensuing decade we made great strides in fostering a collaborative partnership between election officials and the Postal Service. For tens of millions of American voters their ballot is handed to them not by a poll worker, but by their postal carrier and we have seen USPS embrace their role in what I often refer to

as “delivering democracy”. It isn’t just another envelope in with the more than 400 million mail pieces each day: It is someone’s ballot, someone’s vote.

Protocols were established:

- the tracking of election and political mail throughout processing;
- focused training of operational staff on treatment of ballots;
- the creation of a special Service-Type ID (STID) for ballots in the intelligent mail barcodes to raise visibility of ballots in the data (to parallel what the logo does visually);
- the sweeping of plants for ballots in increasing frequency as election day draws near with nightly all-clears verifying that all ballots have been processed and are on their way to their final destination; and
- Election Mail specialists were tasked with outreach to election officials to aid them in their navigation of the many rules and regulations in the tome that is the USPS Domestic Mail Manual (DMM).

Some of these efforts have required overtime.

Some of them require additional trips, and some late trips.

The “Mandatory Stand-up Talk” directive postal employees received in early July outlined no overtime and no late trips and that changes “may be difficult” and that “we may see mail left behind or mail on the workroom floor or docks”. This is diametrically opposed to the ethos of the Postal Service: “Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds”.

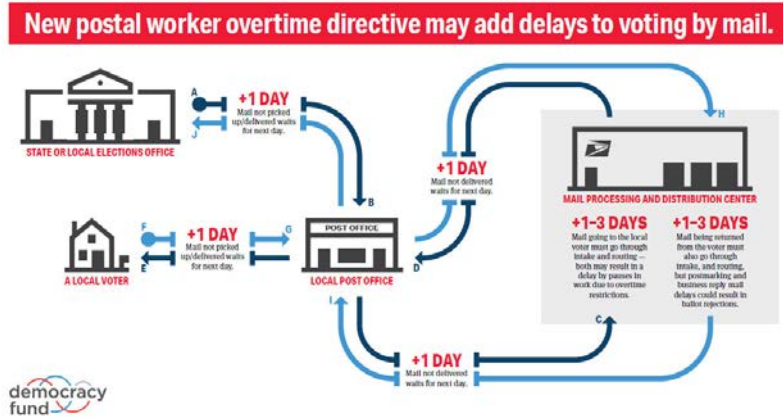
It has been reported that “there IS overtime” and that “there have been no official changes”—yet my understanding is that a mandatory directive outlining that “Every single employee will receive this information, no matter what job they perform” changes the expectation of what that employee will do on the job. Although the Postmaster General made statements in an effort to clarify the situation in his recent testimony, there is still confusion amongst postal employees, election officials, and voters.

My concern is with the postal carrier out on their route and their shift is about to end: Do they finish the route? Do they leave the remaining stops to be picked up the next day? What if there are ballots in those mailboxes?

If the carrier DOES complete their route, will the truck heading for the processing plant wait for the carrier to come in? Even if it means that they don’t leave on time?

If the mail is not collected or does not go to the plant on the day it is picked up, will it be postmarked that day, or the next?

Some will say that it is only delayed 1 day—but in many States 1 day is a day too late for the ballot to count. And there are many points along the journey that such a delay could occur (see Figure 1).



It was reported earlier this week that trucks are leaving on time, but they are leaving empty.

The Postal Service has recommended for years that that ballots mail out at First Class, rather than Marketing Mail (formerly Standard Mail). The use of Marketing Mail is most common in the Western States where we have whole States, and large portions of other States, mailing out ballots to voters weeks in advance of election

day. Many election offices have mailed at this rate not because they have a lesser view of Election Mail, but because they have been told for years that the use of the Election Mail logo and the green Ballot Tag 191 (a placard that goes on the mail trays) allowed the Postal Service to identify ballots and expedite their delivery. This is still what local Postal employees are telling election officials, what they recently experienced in the State's primaries in the last few weeks.

Yet from L'Enfant Plaza election officials have been hearing that, "You get the service that you pay for. The logo does not change the class of service." It is only recently that the Postmaster General has somewhat begrudgingly agreed to continue prioritizing Election Mail.

The tone I am hearing from this Postmaster General is a new one, it is accusatory and combative where previously it was collaborative and instructive. At the recent Board of Governors meeting it was said that "we cannot correct the errors of the Election Boards if they fail to deploy processes that take our normal processing and delivery standards into account." Election boards do not set the dates and deadlines to mail out ballots, State legislatures do and they have been remiss to change them.

The voters should not be disenfranchised because of the failings of their elected officials. In the past the Postal Service has moved mountains if need be to ensure ballots were prioritized—even, and most importantly, in those final days before the deadline.

I will be honest; this is where I do have some internal angst. For years I have been calling on the States change their deadlines to request a ballot—and some have. The Postal Service recommends voters mail back their ballot at least 1 week before it is due, and that is pre-COVID. Yet, 22 States allow a voter to request a ballot in that time—7 allowing for a voter to request a ballot by mail on Monday for Tuesday's election. This sets the wrong expectation for voters, the expectation that even if they do wait until the deadline things will be fine. They won't. Especially if the Postal Service is no longer going to the lengths, they have in the past to make certain that voters aren't the ones to pay the cost for outdated statutes. That cost is high. That cost is with their vote.

It is all about timing. Removal of blue collection boxes, pulling sorting equipment off-line, hiring freeze, rapid reorganization, pilot programs to change carrier routes in urban areas—some of these actions may be warranted and fully supported by data, but the lack of transparency has been palpable; and in a vacuum, you get viral. The public outcry of concern demonstrates that the voters are listening, they are watching, and it is impacting their confidence in their ability to vote by mail.

Last, every election there are interruptions of service. Hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, floods, indeed 9/11 was an election day in New York City. But this year we also are in a global pandemic and do not know where the next hot spot will be nor when it will hit. Our democracy depends on people, and people can get sick. The Illinois Board of Elections is currently under quarantine. We know that Fulton County, GA had a 2-week quarantine in the primary and a death of an employee. The Postal Service employs more than 600K people and processing plants and carrier pickup and delivery depend on them. Now is not the time for a hiring freeze.

ACTION ITEMS

Congress

Fund the USPS.—All of the changes that have been proposed by the new Postmaster General have been done under the auspices of financial stability. Although fiscal changes need to be made, the timing of these changes is questionable. We need to properly fund our Postal Service—not only to support the vibrancy of a safe and secure channel to vote in a global pandemic, but also to ensure rural America remains connected, that our citizens receive their pharmaceuticals, and that our economy isn't further decimated.

Create Formal Election Mail USPS Policy.—To ensure a consistent, expedited, and high level of service for Election Mail every election, USPS should adopt a formal standardized Election Mail policy that encompasses First Class mail service standards and postmarking to prioritize ballot processing and delivery.

Provide Paid Postage for all Election Mail.—Providing pre-paid postage for every voter would reduce barriers to voting and increase efficiency at the local election jurisdiction level by creating a Federal indicia to pay for outbound and inbound Election Mail to voters—a system already in place for military and overseas voters as a part of UOCAVA legislation.

USPS

Treat Election Week as "Peak Season".—Formally treat the week before a Federal election as "peak season." In accordance with holiday "peak season" operating proc-

esses, keep processing plants open and operating during the 2 weekends before election day. Consider mirroring tax-day-level front-line service on election day.

Increase USPS Election Mail Training and Outreach.—Following the protocols used in 2016, require USPS election mail coordinators to reach out to each State's chief election official to promote open communication. Increase all USPS staff's understanding of processing Election Mail and ensure that all front-line customer-facing staff proactively offer Election Mail services like round stamping ballot return envelopes through an increased volume of Election Mail trainings to an expanded scope of USPS staff.

State/Local

Increase Ballot Tracking and Mail Ballot Return Options.—Consider using barcode data—like intelligent mail barcodes—and other information from the USPS to verify that a ballot was submitted in time instead of only relying on a cancellation or postmark. Require Service-Type Identification (STID) for all Election Mail to allow USPS to know where ballots are in the mail stream. Providing voters with expanded options for returning their ballots through drop boxes independent of USPS will aid voters who need to safely return their ballot in the last week before election day.

Align State Ballot Request Deadlines with Reality of Mail Delivery Time Lines.—For many years now, USPS has advised that voters return their ballots back in the mail 1 week before they are due. However, the necessary policy changes to align dates and deadlines with USPS delivery standards hasn't happened in many States and more than 20 States allow for a voter to request a ballot be mailed to them within 7 days of an election—after the time that USPS recommends the ballot be mailed back. This problem will be exacerbated given if ballot prioritization protocols are changed and additional time is added to the process.

Voters

- Don't Wait to Request.
- Don't Wait to Return.
- Know Your Options.

CONCLUSION

I got into the field of election administration almost 20 years ago because I was concerned with what I saw, with what I was hearing. At every turn voters were being told that machines could be hacked, votes flipped, the system was rigged, the candidates were all the same, there was rampant fraud, there would be obstacles like long lines/onerous ID laws/voter intimidation. I was concerned because I saw turnout dwindling, apathy growing, and our democracy slipping away.

Ballots mail out to voters in less than 1 month. Military and overseas voters' ballots will go out in every State in the Nation on September 19. We don't have much time; the runway is running out. The American public is tired, frustrated, grieving the loss of more than 180K souls. They need to be assured that in this moment it is safe and secure to vote by mail if that is what they choose. In this moment their voting booth may be their kitchen table, their ballot box, their mailbox. For voters who opt to vote in person, they need to be provided with safe options that do not cause them to choose between their health and ability to participate.

In this moment their voices will be heard and their votes counted.
I look forward to any questions you may have.

Chairman THOMPSON. Well, thank you very much for your testimony.

Finally, I recognize Secretary Adams to summarize his statement for 5 minutes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. You are muted, sir.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL ADAMS, SECRETARY OF STATE,
COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY**

Mr. ADAMS. I have only done like a thousand of these in the last 4 months, you would think I would figure that out. Thanks. I will start again.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee, good afternoon. I am Michael Adams, Kentucky's secretary of state. I was sworn in January of 6 of this year. Talk about hazing the new guy. Despite the

challenges we have faced this year, Kentucky has a good story to tell, and I am honored to have the opportunity.

On March 6, Kentucky diagnosed its first case of COVID-19. Ten days later, our Governor, Andy Beshear, a Democrat, and I, a Republican, jointly agreed to delay Kentucky's primary election from May 19 to June 23. Before long, we knew the virus would not be gone by June. Our legislature, at my request, came together across party lines to grant a Democratic Governor and Republican secretary of state new joint emergency powers to change our election methods, but only if the Governor and I acted together. To make a change, we must both turn the key.

It was obvious that flexibility in our election system was needed. In our State, usually 98 percent of voters vote in person on election day. That traditional model was not well-suited to today's challenges. Kentucky had the good fortune to vote after several other States, and we learned a lot from their experiences, positive and negative. This flexibility gave us time to monitor those developments.

The biggest benefit, though, of legislators of both parties giving Executive branch officials of both parties the ability to make changes was that the new rules were fair and seen as fair. We avoided the brinkmanship you have seen in some other States. We fashioned fair and clear rules well in advance of the election and consistently messaged the new procedures in order to both inform and reassure voters. Bipartisanship not only led to a better product, with concerns on both sides accommodated, it also showed voters on both sides that our new election rules were legitimate.

To be sure, there were those outside our State who thought they knew better how to run our election than we did. Whether in Hollywood, New York, or here in Congress, they put out false and hateful tweets that riled up citizens of other States to jam our phones with obscene calls and even death threats. Everything they accused us of and everything they predicted would happen was just flat wrong, and they should all be ashamed.

We had a huge voter turnout and no spike in COVID-19 cases. Turns out Kentucky knows best what is best for Kentucky, and I would urge you to let Kentucky be Kentucky, let Michigan be Michigan, and respect the laboratories of democracy that lead to innovation in a decentralized election system. Although I am grateful for the CARES Act funding Congress gave us to reduce our costs, I would rather you give us no funding at all if more funding means you are going to tell us how to run our elections.

In our State, we found that what made the most sense for our June primary was no-excuse absentee voting, as we had a severe drop-off in the number of available poll workers and voting locations. For November, with turnout expected to more than double that of the primary, we are tightening the absentee voting standards somewhat, preserving it for those who need it due to age or health concerns, but also not overwhelming our infrastructure, our county clerks who process the ballots, and our postal system.

In both elections, we have utilized an absentee ballot request portal linked to our driver's license database so we can verify voter identity. We also track ballot envelopes with bar codes and signature match every single one before the ballot is counted.

Both for our primary and general election, we have offered weeks of early in-person voting. I have found that Kentuckians of both parties want to vote in person if they can, and as we showed in June, we know how to conduct in-person voting safely. Although I support absentee balloting for those who need it, early voting is a far less expensive and labor-intensive way to conduct an election. It takes the pressure off election day voting sites. Having more election days also spreads out the crowds, facilitates social distancing.

One silver lining of our pandemic primary is that it prompted an upgrade of our voting equipment in some of our counties where prior voting equipment did not allow for a paper trail. This was due to HAVA dollars that you appropriated us in December. Otherwise, it would not have been possible. We used those funds strategically, alongside CARES Act dollars, to help counties get new scanners and other equipment usable for processing absentee ballots which, of course, are paper ballots.

For me, the gold standard is paper ballots counted electronically, so we get the speed of a quick count but the security of a paper trail. It was a goal of mine over this decade to introduce paper balloting to every Kentucky county, but now it won't take nearly that long.

We have our work cut out for us. I am grateful to Congress for coming together to appropriate funds we States could use to run our elections in a difficult time. I would encourage you to do so again, but not at the expense of any strings attached, red tape, or direction how to run the elections that, under our Federal Constitution, are tasked to the States and us, the election officials.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Adams follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL ADAMS

Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee, good afternoon.

I'm Michael Adams, Kentucky's secretary of state. I was sworn in January 6 of this year. This is my first testimony before Congress, and my first election year as Kentucky's chief elections official. Talk about hazing the new guy. Despite the challenges we've faced this year, Kentucky has a good story to tell and I'm honored to have the opportunity.

On March 6, Kentucky diagnosed its first case of COVID-19. In the days immediately following, the biggest challenge in election administration I thought I faced was in getting enough Lysol and hand sanitizer to our approximately 3,700 election precincts.

Then, virtually overnight, the world changed. The second week of March, we in Kentucky knew this crisis was real when college basketball was canceled. Just 10 days after our first COVID-19 case, our Governor, Andy Beshear, a Democrat, and I, a Republican, jointly agreed to delay Kentucky's primary election from May 19 to June 23, the maximum 5 weeks allowed by law.

Kentucky is not unique in allowing public officials to delay an election during a state of emergency. September 11, 2001, was primary election day in New York City, and since 9/11 many jurisdictions now have these laws. However, Kentucky is very unique in the following respect.

Our legislature, at my request, broadened the Governor's and my joint authority to alter the time or place of an election, adding to those the ability to jointly act to alter the manner of an election. It was obvious in early April, right before our part-time legislature adjourned, that flexibility in our election system was needed. In our State usually 98 percent of voters vote in person on election day. That traditional model was not well-suited to today's challenges. However, our legislature did not have time before constitutionally-mandated adjournment by April 15 to conceive, debate, and pass a new election code. Even if they had, an election plan designed in early April might not have met the needs of late June.

Our legislature came together across party lines and expanded the emergency powers of a Democratic Governor and Republican Secretary of State—but only if we acted together. To make a change, we must both turn the key.

Kentucky had the good fortune to vote after several other States, and we learned a lot from their experiences, positive and negative. This flexibility gave us time to monitor these developments. The biggest benefit, though, of legislators of both parties giving executive branch officials of both parties the ability to make changes was that the new rules were fair, and seen as fair. We avoided the brinksmanship you've seen in other States; we fashioned fair and clear rules, well in advance of the election, and consistently messaged the new procedures in order to both inform and reassure voters. Bipartisanship not only led to a better product, with concerns on both sides accommodated; it also showed voters on both sides that our new election rules were legitimate.

To be sure, there were those outside our State who thought they knew better how to run our election than we did. Whether in Hollywood, New York, or here in Congress, they put out false and hateful tweets that riled up citizens of other States to jam our phones with obscene calls and even death threats. Everything they accused us of, and everything they predicted would happen, was just flat wrong, and they should all be ashamed. Turns out Kentucky knows best what is best for Kentucky, and I would urge you to let Kentucky be Kentucky, let Michigan be Michigan, and respect the laboratories of democracy that lead to innovation in a decentralized election system. Although I'm grateful for the CARES Act funding Congress gave us to reduce our costs, I would rather you give us no funding at all if it means you're going to tell us how to run our elections.

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Both for our primary and general election, we've offered weeks of early in-person voting. I've found that Kentuckians of both parties want to vote in person if they can, and as we showed in June, we know how to conduct in-person voting safely. Although I support absentee balloting for those who need it, early voting is a far less expensive and labor-intensive way to conduct an election, and it takes the pressure off election day voting sites, where we face the challenge of finding both the locations and the poll workers. Having more election days also spreads out the crowds and facilitates social distancing.

One silver lining of our pandemic primary is that it prompted an upgrade of voting equipment in some of our counties whose prior voting equipment did not allow for a paper trail. This was possible due to HAVA dollars you appropriated in December. We used those funds strategically alongside CARES Act dollars to help counties get new scanners and other equipment usable for processing absentee ballots, which of course are paper ballots. For me, the gold standard is paper ballots counted electronically, so we get the speed of a quick count but the security of a paper trail. Whether you're concerned about vote hacking by foreign powers, or domestic actors tampering with voting machines, or even just the ability to perform a reliable recount, paper ballots counted electronically makes sense. It was a goal of mine over the decade to introduce paper balloting to every Kentucky county, but it now won't take nearly that long.

We have our work cut out for us. I'm grateful to Congress for coming together to appropriate funds we States could use to run our elections in a difficult time. I would encourage you to do so again, but not at the expense of any strings attached, red tape, or direction in how to run the elections that, under our Federal Constitution, are tasked to the States, and us, their election officials. Thank you.

Chairman THOMPSON. I thank all the witnesses for their testimony.

I remind the subcommittee that we will have 5 minutes to question the panel. I now recognize myself for questions.

I would remind the Ranking Member from his comments that the committee's oversight jurisdiction directs the committee to review and study on a continuing basis all Government activities [inaudi-

ble] of the homeland security. Safe, secure elections, free from disinformation campaigns, are integral parts to homeland security. Moreover, the United States Postal Service is a critical component to the Nation's critical infrastructure, and this committee is responsible for ensuring the security of that critical infrastructure.

All of us on this committee are elected officials. We have seen elections conducted in our communities time and time again [inaudible] by excellent local officials. Clearly, we see elections as a local responsibility. We trust those individuals. However, President Trump has repeatedly made baseless allegations and spread misinformation about voting by mail. In fact, in July, the President even issued an appalling tweet urging that we delay the American election because of the so-called risk of voting by mail. Ironically, we know that the President votes by mail, the First Lady votes by mail. The Postmaster General testified that he plans to vote by mail, as he has done for many years.

Ms. Patrick, to be clear, is there any meaningful difference between absentee voting and vote by mail?

Ms. PATRICK. I think that there is a lot of confusion around that, Mr. Chairman. In the vast majority of the States, it is one and the same. Some previously called it absentee voting, and they have changed their statutes, like Florida did, to refer to it as vote by mail. There are a handful of States where they do make a subtle distinction in their statutes between absentee and vote by mail, and sometimes that distinction is in reference to whether or not a voter on one list or the other permanently gets a ballot mailed to them or whether they need to make a request for every election.

But when we hear about it in the National landscape, it is almost commonly referring to the exact same process of a ballot being mailed out to a voter and then the voter having options in how they would like to return their ballot.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you.

Secretary Benson, I understand that Michigan has approved universal vote by mail. In your experience, is vote by mail uniquely prone to fraud?

Ms. BENSON. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. No, we actually have now conducted 3 elections this year alone with a full right to vote by mail, with more citizens voting by mail than ever before and with zero reports or evidence of fraud.

That said, the signature standard that we have in place to ensure that signatures are matched on the envelope in which a ballot is sent to the signature we have on file ensures that we have a security check in place so that we can find and investigate irregularities, if and when it occurs. So we have got a system in place to protect the process, but notably, the evidence shows primarily that people want to vote by mail and there is zero evidence of fraud or irregularities.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

Secretary Adams, in your short tenure there, have you found much fraud in vote by mail or absentee ballot process?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased to say that our election this year was clean. I did have some concerns about going from about 2 percent absentee balloting to what we ended up with, which was about 75 percent. We put a lot of protocols in place

to make sure that we didn't have vote fraud. We formed an inter-agency task force with Federal and State partners to closely supervise potential problem spots. There are certain parts of our State that have more of a history of election shenanigans than other parts, and so we were very vigilant, we surveilled it tightly, and we had a clean election.

Chairman THOMPSON. So as far as you are concerned, those local officials that you talked about, if left to their own devices, they will probably design a system, to the extent practicable, that is fraud-free?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, sir, I will say this: You know, No. 1, I have confidence in all of my colleagues of both parties who are in my position. Some have different models of what election day looks like than what we have in Kentucky, and I like what we have maybe better than what they have, but I think they are all people of integrity. They are all people held accountable by their voters to have clean and fair elections. But I do think that local control is best, State control is best. It enables us to design the system that meets our specific needs.

With respect to fraud, you know, we have really tight protocols here in Kentucky. As I referenced in my testimony, we require the voter to apply for the ballot. We run that through the database, make sure all the information is correct, and we then track the ballots and bar codes, and then we signature match every single one. These are best practices that we have seen in other States and we have implemented those here.

So just to be clear, I think all things being equal, voting in person is the gold standard, but we are in unique times and we have got to acclimate to that.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

Mr. Dimondstein, in the few minutes that I have left, let me thank you and the Members for all you have done to fight for our Nation's Postal Service. The Postal Service is a good public good, and in rural areas like the one I represent and where I live, it is truly an essential lifeline.

How have the President's efforts to politicize the Postal Service hurt this institution?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. Well, look, this is an institution, Mr. Chairman, that has 91 percent favorability rating from the people of this country. Throughout the political spectrum, it is equal, whether someone identifies as a Republican or a Democrat, Independent, Libertarian, Green, or whatever. So when the top official of the land calls the Postal Service a joke, consciously says they are withholding needed emergency COVID relief funds, that the Post Office will not be as successful in serving the people of the country in vote by mail, rails that package rates should be raised 4 times, which would be a detriment to every single consumer in this country and every single e-retailer, it undermines the people's confidence in the Postal Service. For us as postal workers in the front lines—and especially in the front lines as essential workers in this pandemic, it is an insult.

It also paves the way to a privatization agenda, Mr. Chairman, because that is the agenda of this White House. It is in writing. You are not hearing this from me. It was in a June 2018 Office

Management Budget report. But to get to privatize, that means dismantle, break up, and sell to private corporations for private profit. When you have a 91 percent approval rating, you have to break that bond, because the people will never allow something that they feel so strongly about to be taken from them. The way you try to break that bond is you degrade and you undermine service so it doesn't work for the people of this country.

We are in a moment where we are hearing from customers all over the country that the service that they are used to is not there and it needs to be restored and needs to be restored quickly.

Chairman THOMPSON. Well, thank you.

I thank all our witnesses for being here today.

I now recognize the Ranking Member of the full committee, the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Rogers, for questions.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As you and I have both talked about for years and expressed our frustration for years, for the 16 years we have been on this committee, we don't have the broad jurisdiction we think we should have. I would be thrilled if, in fact, we had the jurisdictional reach that you described earlier, but I respectfully disagree that we have any jurisdiction whatsoever over the topic of today's hearing.

Having said that, Mr. Adams, you heard Secretary Benson describe how safe her in-person voting was in her State because of the distancing and the sanitization. Do you find that in-person voting is unsafe in Kentucky?

Mr. ADAMS. No, sir. I am very proud that we had hundreds of thousands of people vote in-person in Kentucky, and we had no spike in COVID-19 cases. We have had a spike, subsequent to that, coming after the 4th of July holiday weekend, and we have hit a new plateau since then, unfortunately.

But, no, I am really proud of the fact that we conducted in-person voting safely. We did that by offering election day voting at vote centers where any person in the county could go vote, regardless of precinct. We also had 2 weeks of early voting now to space out the crowds and ensure social distancing. But I am very, very confident that we can repeat that. I think we will have a lot more people vote in person in November. I am proud that we had high turnout in our primary. We had about 29 percent. That is pretty good for us. I think we will have about 72 percent in November.

I am concerned about overwhelming our load capacity with absentee ballots. So I am not going to run down absentee ballots, but I think it is not the full solution by itself. I think we have to have in-person voting also. I found that opinion not just among Republicans who are dubious of voting through the mail system, but also from a lot of Democrats.

Mr. ROGERS. Let me ask, do you believe one method of voting is more secure than any other method?

Mr. ADAMS. I think, all things being equal, voting in person is preferable. I will say that we haven't had, that I have seen in my reading of history or otherwise, any sort of mass conspiracy to steal a State-wide election since about the late 1940's, we had a very famous case then. But we still do have election fraud, and it tends to be in local races, usually a county executive race or a mayor race. You have got a small jurisdiction, it takes very few votes to

steal it, and you have got patronage on the other side of it, and this happens in small towns sometimes, mostly the eastern part of our State. But those are isolated instance. You see those every once in a while. Those are easier to catch if you have got in-person voting, because that is the voting where you are supervising the voting with election officials.

So all things being equal, that is certainly my preference, but, you know, certainly my grandparents are still alive, they are in their 80's, and they want to vote, and they are nervous about going out to do that in person right now.

Mr. ROGERS. Great. Thank you.

I wanted to ask you about the difference between absentee ballot voting and this universal voting. In Alabama, my home State, in order to vote absentee, you have to request a ballot. My understanding—and up until this election, we had about 12 different reasons that you could vote absentee. They were pretty broad. But in this year during the pandemic, there is no reason necessary. If you want to vote absentee because you are just remotely being worried about being exposed to the virus, you can vote absentee.

How, in your view, does that differ from universal voting? My understanding of universal voting is that everybody on the voting roll is sent a ballot. Is that not correct?

Ms. PATRICK. So it is a question of semantics, Mr. Congressman. So I often talk about voting by mail or absentee voting as an evolution. Every State in the country started out with there being an excuse being required for absentee voting. Then what has happened over time is that the excuses either grow in number and then eventually they get removed and you have no-excuse absentee.

Mr. ROGERS. Right.

Ms. PATRICK. Some States have kept that no-excuse absentee terminology or phraseology. Others have then changed it to say vote by mail. What has happened in the next stage in the evolution is that very often a voter—the voting population tends to like to vote by mail or vote absentee, and then a jurisdiction gets overwhelmed with all of the applications.

I saw this in my own home State of Arizona when I was a local election official there. We had a lot of people, and every time they send in an application, particularly for States where it has to be for every election—and we saw this in the primary elections of election officials being overwhelmed with all of these applications coming in. I did a study, and it turns out that each one of those applications ends up costing around a dollar for processing, for postage. So every one of those application has a cost associated with it, and year after year, we found the same voters were sending in the same application.

So then, States moved to a permanent absentee list, and that is where my former State of Arizona sits right now with 60 or 70 percent of their voters on a permanent list, and that is when the former—the other States then go to that final stage of all mail elections.

So in this moment, universal vote by mail is a phrase that is being used that, quite frankly, has never been part of the lexicon. I have worked on the EAC's voting voluntary system guidelines

and the glossary of those documents for years, and it has never been referred to as universal vote-by-mail elections.

So in this moment, we are seeming to redefine phrases that are being used as though there is a definite distinction across all States and, unfortunately, that is just not the case, because you do have States where they have both. They call it absentee voting if you are 65 years of age or older or have a permanent disability and you are on a permanent list, or they call it vote by mail if you send in an application to vote in that specific election.

So, unfortunately, we have so many different terms. Some of those terms are used for the same process and some of the processes use different terms in a given State.

Mr. ROGERS. Right.

Ms. PATRICK. So I hope that helped to clarify.

Mr. ROGERS. Well, the concern that I have got is, you know, I was a county commissioner back in the 1980's, and I am familiar with how we ran the processes, and we always had problems trying to keep our voting rolls cleaned up, because people move, people die, and it is just—it was a perpetual problem and continues to be. I worry if we just start sending ballots out to people because they are on voting rolls, that it could lead to fraud.

But with that, my time is expired. I thank you for being here. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey for 5 minutes, Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

In addition to accepting ballots returned by mail, many election offices give voters the opportunity to return ballots in drop boxes throughout the city. I support this effort to provide voters more ways to return their ballots but have concerns about the security of the ballot boxes. CISA is responsible for providing election officials advice on both physical and cybersecurity and has several guidance documents related to election security.

Secretary Benson and Secretary Adams, what advice, if any, has CISA provided you about the security vulnerabilities associated with ballot drop boxes and how to mitigate them?

Ms. BENSON. Well, I will start. Thank you, Congressman.

Now, to date, we, as I have mentioned, provided nearly a thousand drop boxes to election jurisdictions across the State of Michigan. [Inaudible] you see [inaudible] to emphasize [inaudible] to meet the needs of our voters this year, and I want that to be recognized. [Inaudible] have succeeded in our elections this year [inaudible]. Our drop boxes are located [inaudible] many are located inside city halls [inaudible] those doors are typically under surveillance by the cameras [inaudible]. We also had clear chain of custody [inaudible].

To answer your specific question about CISA, we are in regular communication with them, and oftentimes it is a reactive communication where they are sharing with us information that they hear of that we should know about. But that said, our partnership with them is one that is very robust, and our communications have been significant. You know, I am sure that if they hear of any credible

threats in the security of our drop boxes, they would share them with us.

Mr. ADAMS. I—

Ms. BENSON. Go ahead, Secretary.

Mr. ADAMS. OK. Sorry about that.

So thank you, Representative. So I will just second everything that Secretary Benson has said with regard to CISA drop boxes. I will add this: This is pretty novel for our State. Again, historically we have about 2 percent of voters vote absentee. There really hasn't been a demand to necessitate drop boxes. They are expensive. They are about 2 grand apiece. They are like tanks.

So it is an expense that we haven't invested in historically. But I found, interestingly, that the demand for drop boxes in my State in the primary came from Republicans. I was a little dubious that we could get this done without a big firestorm, but actually it was Republicans that liked the drop boxes. I won't represent that that is a universal viewpoint, but what I found is a lot of Republicans are comfortable applying for a absentee ballot and getting it, voting at home safely, and then just don't want to mail it back. They want to bring it back. They want the personal satisfaction of dropping a vote into a bin and knowing it is in the bin. So we actually found that there was greater like of drop boxes on the GOP side than on the Democratic side in our June primary.

We have really strict protocols. Back in the primary, we only gave each county a smattering of them, and we told them to put them inside the clerk's office or inside a government building. Looking back, I think that was maybe a little bit too restrictive, because a lot of these buildings were closed or had limited hours and were trying to avoid people indoors with this pandemic. So in November, we are going to have more drop boxes and we are going to put them outdoors, but we are going to have them under continuous monitoring by government officials to make sure that there is no hanky-panky with them.

But to be frank, these things are more secure than mailboxes. Mailboxes are pretty secure, but these things are mailboxes and then some.

[Inaudible.]

Chairman THOMPSON. You have to unmute yourself.

Mrs. LESKO. Hi. This is Congresswoman Debbie Lesko.

You know, I have to tell you that I get a little bit frustrated when we continually, at the opening statements, Mr. Chairman, you continually, I think just about every time, you have bashed President Trump, and I would actually like to try to get some bipartisan stuff done. It is just frustrating to me.

You know, there was a—I have to ask a question for clarification from Ms. Patrick. Ms. Patrick, I understood you to say when Mr. Rogers asked you a question about the difference between, you know, a requested ballot versus universal mail-in ballot, which would mean that every registered voter received a mail-in ballot, and you had said something to the effect of, unless I misunderstood you, that, oh, we just have these permanent early voter lists which basically, as you know, in Arizona, if I wanted to be on that list, I as a voter request to be on that list. I am not just automatically sent a mail-in ballot.

But yet there are States, in my understanding, that every registered voter does get mailed a ballot. They didn't request it. It is Washington, Oregon, Utah, Colorado, Hawaii.

So can you clarify your statement, please?

Ms. PATRICK. Yes, absolutely. I am sorry—and thank you for bringing that up, Representative Lesko. So what I was meaning to more clearly define is that some States say vote by mail even if you need to submit an application. So whether it is a permanent application to get on the list or whether it is basically an application for a vote-by-mail ballot. So, when we take a look at some place like Florida, you apply for every election that you want to get a ballot, but they don't call it absentee voting. They call it vote by mail.

Mrs. LESKO. Thank you.

Ms. PATRICK. You are correct that there are also all-mail elections, and there are States that do that. In fact, of course in your home State of Arizona, many localized elections for more than a decade have been all-mail elections at the county level, just not at the State.

Mrs. LESKO. Thank you for clarifying because there is a concern. I think what President Trump is saying is there is a concern that all registered voters would get automatically mailed a ballot versus a voter requesting a mail-in ballot, which is done in Arizona, and we have been doing it in Arizona for years. Like the other secretary of state said, that they check the signature.

But I guess I am going to ask the Kentucky secretary of state, don't you think there is a risk of voting—every single person on the voter registration list a ballot? Because I don't know about in your State, but in our State, there is certainly—the voting rolls aren't always updated. So you are going to have people that are still registered at an old address. You are going to have people that have died that haven't been taken off the rolls because it is often a little bit difficult to get the name off of the rolls because I think in Arizona it is still the law where the person has to get it like 3 times mailed to them, and the person that receives it saying, "No, this person isn't here anymore." That is my question to you.

Mr. ADAMS. Well, sure, there is a big difference, from my perspective, in Kentucky between a universal vote-by-mail system and an absentee-ballot system. On the West Coast, they register people automatically to vote if their name is in a government database. Again, I have confidence in my colleagues. I think they are people of integrity, but that to me, for Kentucky, would not be a good system.

One of the issues I ran on for this position last year was getting our voter rolls cleaned up. During the campaign, it came out that we had about 200,000 people on our voter rolls out of 3.4 million registered voters—people who had either moved away, passed away, or been put away. I have actually thought that number was low-balled.

As part of our election agreement, the Governor and I sent post-cards to everybody on the voter file. We got about 400,000 of those cards back in the mail undeliverable. So we are in the process of removing those people within the time period that we are permitted to do so by law. So, in Kentucky, that would just be a night-

mare, just mailing ballots out through the phone book. I wouldn't advocate for that.

Mrs. LESKO. All right, thank you.

Mr. ADAMS. But I would—yes.

Mrs. LESKO. Thank you.

Just a closing statement, Mr. Chairman. You know, it is frustrating to me, we already passed—the Democrats already passed their post office bill, and here we are, almost a week later—it was last Saturday—and we are doing this, like, almost a week later, in a committee that doesn't even have jurisdiction. To me, this doesn't make sense. I yield back. Thank you.

Chairman THOMPSON. Well, gentlelady, I read into the record the responsibility for this committee. Your concerns are noted. Everything I said about the President came out of his mouth. So I am only repeating what President Trump has said. Now, if you don't like what I repeat, then you need to tell the President not to say it. As long as he says it, I am going to repeat it.

The Chair recognizes the gentlelady from New York, Miss Rice.

Miss RICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Benson, in 2016, we saw just how easily a hostile foreign government can wreak havoc by using social media to spread disinformation and sow doubt and cynicism about the democratic process, including by trying to make people believe their votes won't count. Now, while here we are 4 years later, we know that there are still hostile foreign governments doing that very same thing. We are unfortunately hearing this similar kind of misinformation, disinformation, and outright lies directly from the Oval Office, from the President himself.

You, Secretary Benson, yourself, have been on the receiving end of one of President Trump's Twitter attacks against voting by mail in which his original tweet was actually false, and he withdrew it and then filed another one. But my question is, how do you address the issue of dealing with misinformation and disinformation to the people that you represent? Specifically, how are you able to convince voters that this process is legitimate and that their vote is going to count and matter?

Ms. BENSON. Well, you are right. The challenges this year, like never before, are that—are attempts to hack the voter's mind. You know, noting that we are here, that I am here today before the Committee on Homeland Security, there is a real, in my view, connection to the work that we do and the work that you all do in that protecting the security of our elections is as critical this year as it has ever been. Now, that takes 2 forms—No. 1, our infrastructure, making sure our voter rolls are secure and impervious to any types of hacking, which we have increased the security of, conducting post-election audits, risk-limiting audits, that we are now piloting and implementing State-wide which, of course, confirm that the machine counts of ballots are accurate.

That infrastructure security is key. All of the States, many of the States, have been really ramping up their efforts in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security and CISA this year, and then that feeds into our work to protect voters from efforts to hack their mind and sow seeds of doubt about the integrity of our elections.

The bottom line for me is that, this year, the results of our elections in Michigan and, I believe, Nation-wide will be an accurate reflection of the will of the people. Our elections will be secure. What the unknown is, what the challenge is, is ensuring that everyone knows that, that regardless of who they vote for, that they will have faith at the end of the day that the system was secure and that their vote was counted.

Now, efforts to sow those seeds of doubt in our electorate's mind have come from domestic sources and from foreign sources, this year more than ever before. What we have done is a number of things, in part, constant communication with our colleagues in other States because none of us need to re-create the wheel, and we are all dealing with this together. There is a lot of bipartisan collaboration with the secretaries this year that I am really proud to be a part of.

Second, we have established a website, [Michigan.gov/election security](https://michigan.gov/election-security), which we will keep up-to-date, pushing back on every rumor or piece of misinformation that is reported to us and proactively also sending out information that gives voters confidence that we are on it, that our system is secure, and that our decentralized system of elections in Michigan, where we have 1,500 local jurisdictions all running elections actually helps to eliminate the possibility of any type of massive or State-wide effort to impact the security of the system.

That said, we all have a role to play. We, at the secretary of state's office, can get out the trusted information and develop it. But we all have a role to play. You all have a role to play. Every voice has a role to play this year in sending out that trusted information, being trusted messengers of that information, on social media and otherwise. That is why we have partnered with professional athletes, business leaders, and other influencers to help us get that information out in a way that will reach the voters and push back against the rhetoric that is only going to increase in the weeks ahead and deliver trusted information about the sanctity and security of their vote.

Miss RICE. Thank you.

Secretary Adams, you mentioned something that, you know, brought me back to what happened here in New York, my home State, on our primary day back in June. Because of the pandemic, more people took advantage of voting by mail because they did not feel safe going to vote in person. As a result, I don't think that New York was prepared, we didn't have the appropriate infrastructure in place to be able to get results as quickly as possible, right? So there were some races that weren't called for, you know, 6 to 8 weeks which, of course, feeds into, you know, the President's misinformation and disinformation about, well, you know, if we can't call any election on election night, then that means whatever result comes thereafter is necessarily suspect and fraudulent and rigged.

So, you know, just asking what your tips, because you mentioned in your, I believe in your testimony or in one of your responses to your questions that you had, like, a quadruplefold of mail-in ballots that came in because of the pandemic. So, if you could just talk about what ways that you shored up your infrastructure—your

election infrastructure—to ensure that you could count every vote and do it as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Mr. ADAMS. Sure. Thank you, Representative. So we did a few things that were new and unique. We allowed the local officials to begin processing absentee ballots much earlier, not announcing any results, of course, but running the ballots through the machines. We calculated that would have taken about a month to count them all if we had not let them get started earlier. So we let them start earlier. It still took a good week for us to get all the ballots counted, but it would have been even longer without that.

We also invested in new equipment. We used HAVA dollars we had left over that you all gave us back in December. We also used CARES Act dollars to buy scanners and other equipment, sorters, so our counties could get up to speed. We had 29 counties when I took office that had no machine at all capable of having a paper trail. So I think we are pretty close. I think this year we will have actually every county up to speed on having that capacity.

Something that we are doing for November that is unique compared to the primary is we are actually starting the availability of absentee ballot requests earlier but also closing it earlier. We only had about a month back in the primary just because of the press of time. The virus developed so late with our primary, we only had about a month to both get the absentee ballots requested and out and also do early voting at the same time, and it was a real crunch on our election officials at the ground level.

This time we are doing it in stages. We opened up our portal for requests about a week ago, and we are going to close it in early October. Then that will enable those to be processed and allow our county clerks to then pivot to 3 weeks of in-person voting. So we are not getting a double whammy at the same time.

So we are going to have 6 weeks of availability for absentee ballots for those who need them, and that is a subjective decision of the voter. Then we pivot to early in-person voting. So I think by transitioning in that way, we can handle the demand. I think the risk, point of diminishing returns, if we had too many absentee ballots cast, there would be a concern about a ballot—the clerk's capacity to process them, let alone the ability of the Postal Service to manage them. But I think we have got it handled.

Chairman THOMPSON. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Miss RICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Katko, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is good to see everybody again.

Ms. Benson and Mr. Adams, these questions are kind-of focused on you because you are responsible for the election security in your States. We did a series of roundtables down in Washington last year, earlier this year, and I did a roundtable in New York State. What we learned from the roundtables is that the election ISACs inundate the local board of elections folks with information, and they are not always able to appropriately filter and appreciate the importance of those directives.

A woman who is a part-time person who is on the board of elections in Oswego, one of 62 counties in New York State, said that

last year she had 1,672 directives from the ISAC. She is not trained in cybersecurity. She is not trained in electronics, and the person that she works with on her computer systems is—has many other tasks within the county, is only very part-time at the board of elections.

So, based on that, when Congresswoman Rice and myself introduced H.R. 8011, the Cyber Navigators Act, and so we are just trying to get a feel, and what it does is establishes grant funding to States for cybersecurity experts and basically to just share IT folks that are laser-focused on election security and board of elections issues only, and just help me—provide technical support as well—and I just want to try to get a little idea of what the problems are in you two's States. Do you see similar things with getting inundated with information from the ISACs, and would this type of bill that I described be helpful to you? Ms. Benson, go first, please.

Ms. BENSON. OK, thank you. Yes, it would. I mean, I think, again, in our view, team sport. You know, partnerships are key to success, sharing of information, communication. There is no role for that of, you know, withholding of information or partisan agendas when it comes to just making sure our elections are acceptable and secure is my approach.

So, for us, we talk regularly and partner with our 1,500 local election administrators, but it is 1,500 throughout the State of Michigan. The more support, the more investment, the more we can invest in their election infrastructures through support of Federal funding—and I do believe that standards are important as well and that the Federal Government has every right to say, “If you are going to accept our funds, you have to meet these guidelines.” I think that has actually worked quite well in the past, with the Help America Vote Act and other election sources of funding.

So, that said, you know, I completely support the concept of cyber navigators and have worked with other State agencies to evaluate and improve local and county infrastructure, and the more support that we can have from our Federal Government, the more effective we will be able to be in doing that.

Mr. KATKO. OK. Great. Thanks.

Mr. Adams.

Mr. ADAMS. Thank you, Representative. I am happy to take a look at your and Representative Rice's bill, but it sounds like a really great idea. It is an issue that we have talked about here in Kentucky is cyber navigators. We have a decentralized election system. I like to tell people we don't have an election in Kentucky; we have 120 elections. We have 120 counties with their own election officials, and those people have responsibility for other tasks too. Ultimately their election system is only as good as their local cybersecurity.

So I have encouraged our county clerks to work very directly with the ISACs. I have tried to build those relationships between the Federal Government and the local governments. I do know the ISACs tend to send out a lot of information, and it is not always—if you get 3 emails a day, sometimes you wonder, you know, on this one, is it a big deal? But they do a great job. They have been really valuable partners.

I do think it would be helpful if we had some folks available, maybe to travel the circuit and hit county spots. When I traveled around my State campaigning, I saw that some of the clerks' offices didn't appear to have secure WiFi. I think that has been improved since then.

But I do have concerns occasionally also about the physical plan that some of our county clerks offices, they are in old courthouses, built in the 1800's sometimes, and just not designed for tight security. You know, they have got windows and that sort of thing where that might be access. So, to be clear, you know, we have reviewed all of this. We feel like we are in a good position, but we could always get better.

Mr. KATKO. OK. Ms. Benson, if it is 200 election districts and 1,500 people responsible in those election districts, I would just respectfully suggest—and I think you agree—that what we are contemplating doing is having IT people that only work with you folks, and they are yours. You hire them. But they help monitor your systems and digest what the ISACs are saying so that you can better secure your systems, because we have had a lot of talk today about the Postal Service. We even had a robust discussion about the real big concern down the road is, are we going to have ransomware attacks? Are we going to have attacks from the Russians that are going to disrupt our services? So I ask you both to take a look at this bill and give me your thoughts because it is picking up steam, and I really want to try and help you with this as much as I can.

Ms. BENSON. We will. If I could mention that we did—with our past Federal HAVA security funding, we were able to hire a full-time election security director for the first time in our State who has been responsible with working directly with our local counties [inaudible] their infrastructure, their websites, and the security. So additional support will help us get even more efficient in that regard, and we will take a look at the legislation and offer what support we can. Thank you.

Mr. KATKO. OK.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you.

Chairman THOMPSON. The gentleman's time has expired.

I recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Correa.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this most important hearing. Can you hear me OK? Can you hear me? Yes? Yes. Thank you very much. I wanted to follow up on some of Mr. Katko's comments, and I have a question directed at Secretary Benson and Secretary Adams. As you know, Russian interference in the 2016 election is well-documented, their attempt to influence our election, and 21 States actually were breached by cyber attacks. So my question to both secretaries is, are you seeing any repeat of the 2016 elections with reference to cyber attacks, cyber probes of your systems today?

Ms. BENSON. Secretary Adams, would you like to take that, or would you like me to?

Mr. ADAMS. Sure. Thanks. Yes, sure. So we have not been breached, but there has been rattling of our doorknob, let's put it that way. I don't want to get too specific in this setting. Happy to share more—

Mr. CORREA. You are getting knocks at the door. You are getting knocks at the door.

Mr. ADAMS. That is exactly right. So I appreciate the point you are making, Representative. All of our other problems don't just go away because we have got this big equipment problem. We still have to keep our eye on the other balls, cybersecurity being one of the foremost.

Ms. BENSON. I will just add that we have been consistently monitoring, in partnership with our local governments and the Federal authorities, the potential for threats. We have also increased the security around our qualified voter file, implemented State-wide audits, and convened an election security task force with National experts, including representatives from Federal Government, to help advise us on how to increase the security of our system.

So that said, we have not encountered, as, you know, our neighbors in other States may have, any significant attempts at the State level or at any local levels, to interfere with our system. But, you know, we are 60 days out, and a lot can happen in those 60 days. So the bottom line for us is we are prepared, if that knock comes, to push back and also to publicize it and raise awareness about it so that people know the facts and the evidence of what has happened and exactly what we did to stop any potential attack and protect our system.

So we are prepared to protect the system, and we are prepared to identify any attacks before they occur, and I am confident that we will if that happens.

Mr. CORREA. Another question to Secretary Benson and Secretary Adams. You know, this morning, as I was driving into work, I heard a story on the radio that nursing homes, the seniors at our nursing homes, there is a concern that they may not be able to have their votes counted because they rely on vote-by-mail exclusively to vote. I thought to myself, what about our servicemen and -women around the world that also vote by mail? What assurances are you—what steps are you taking to make sure that seniors and our service members have their votes received and counted at your local respective States? Thank you very much.

Ms. BENSON. Thank you. That is such an important question on both fronts, and I will take both. It kind-of is captured by—the bottom line is we are doing everything we can administratively, within our existing statutory authority in Michigan and the funding that we have, to secure and ensure the votes of our seniors and our military and overseas voters are counted. But we have some challenges and I will talk about that. On the—for our senior citizens, making sure that either drop boxes are accessible, are, you know, are available to those who may not feel comfortable returning their ballots through the mail, are important, and identifying the specific needs of each particular community is, you know, important. Also, of course, protecting them from outside individuals coming in at this unique moment in the pandemic.

So, where we have also had to move polling locations that were in senior centers to other locations, we have done that ahead of time, proactively in most cases, to also protect the health and safety of those individuals and then work to ensure that they can still

access their vote either through the mail, voting early, or in person, and again that underscores why choices are so important.

With regards to military and overseas voters, as Congresswoman Slotkin mentioned earlier, I have personal experience with this as a military spouse. In Michigan, ballots can be electronically delivered to overseas voters but must be returned via U.S. mail, and that is in our law. I have called on our State legislature to change that and allow the electronic return from—or the fax return from military members overseas and their spouses and their dependents, in particular. But we are waiting on them to act. We need them to act because this action is critical in the face of this year's particular challenges where we have already heard from numerous voters living overseas, whether serving in the military or for other reasons, who cannot access the mail due to the pandemic.

So, for them, we are working on finding other options, but nothing really is a substitute for the action that we need from the State legislature to enable our overseas voters to more easily return their ballot through a secure, electronic method as many States already allow. So my hope is we will get some changes there, but we are also looking for other avenues and workarounds in the next few weeks to ensure that we are—that we are working with our overseas voters to protect their votes.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much. The gentleman's time has expired. We recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, Mr. Joyce.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you, Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Rogers. This is a question I think we are going to direct specifically to Secretary Adams and Secretary Benson. What has the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the State of Michigan, what has been done to clean up your voter rolls to ensure that ballots are being sent out to who are truly eligible voters? Secretary Adams, I will ask you to answer first, please.

Mr. ADAMS. Thank you. As I said a minute ago, it is an issue that I ran on; it is one I take really seriously. [Inaudible] to report to move this as quickly as I can, but also per my agreement with our Governor, part of what I got from that for my side was a much prompter, much more aggressive movement toward compliance. The law that requires us to keep our voter rolls clean was passed by, I should say, a Democratic Congress and signed by Bill Clinton. It is not a partisan issue to keep your voters rolls up-to-date. There is just no legitimate interest in not having that.

So part of what we did is we did a mailing, as provided for in the National Voter Registration Act. It was in the form of a postcard informing voters of their new options to vote by absentee ballot by mail, by drop box, or early in person or on election day in person, and that gave us a way to inform the public, but it also gave us a way to get notices back undeliverable and put people in the queue for removal from the rolls.

Something else that we did that was part of that agreement was, the people that are identified as having returned postcards, they get a letter from me that explains that it is an offense under our criminal law in Kentucky to knowingly be dual-registered and certainly to vote in more than one State. So those letters have gone out, and we are getting responses back. We are taking people off

the rolls—with their written consent. We are not purging people right before a Presidential election, but we are removing people that we have confirmed have passed away through the—working with the Democratic Governor of my State and his bureau of [inaudible] statistics.

So, between that partnership, removing our dead voters, and also actively seeking out and finding people who have moved and getting their consent to remove them, we have actually made significant process. We had a month recently where we took off more dead voters than we added live voters. It is pretty amazing to see in a Presidential year when you see a lot higher voter registration.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you. I think that is great. The removal of deceased voters in your Commonwealth, that is very important for a fair and safe election.

Secretary Benson, would you like to answer this as well?

Ms. BENSON. I would, yes. I want to emphasize that here in Michigan—and I have said this for years now—we believe that good healthy election administration is about making it easier to vote and harder to cheat. The efforts that we have implemented to clean up our voter rolls really began on Day 1 when I took office and I joined ERIC, the Electronic Registration Information Center. That partnership, which is a collaboration of the majority of States—I think close to 30 now in our country—enables us to be in constant and frequent communication to track individuals who mail—I am sorry—who move to other States and perhaps register there, enables us to then update our records accurately, and it similarly enables us to proactively identify and remove voters once they have been deceased. So joining ERIC was very critical as a first move.

Second, what we have done is implement automatic voter registration. Now, what that has done is not only made it easier, much easier than ever before, for our citizens who are eligible to vote to become registered voters. But it also requires us, every time someone comes to our office to get a driver's license or State ID, or update their license or ID, we check their voter registration record, and we can increase the accuracy of our voter rolls daily now.

One of the most interesting and unexpected side effects of implementing AVR has been that we are able to now consistently, daily, across the State, confirm or update or correct errors in our voter registration records that may have accumulated over years.

The last thing that we did—and this is important—for the first time in 9 years, we did a State-wide mailing, which the secretary, my colleague from Kentucky, has emphasized and many other of my colleagues as well, is key to also, in addition to what I just talked about, making sure we are touching every voter and identifying inaccuracies or outdated records. So our State-wide mailing, which was conducted this year, which was, of course, our mailing to every registered voter of information of how to vote by mail and an application—

Mr. JOYCE. I am just going to interrupt you because I just have a few seconds. Secretary Adams, we know that, in New York, over 30,000 ballots were mailed to voters just a day before the June primary. What are you working to do to make sure that ballots are

mailed out sooner so that you are not scrambling as the election approaches?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, for the—our normal default in our law is a voter can request an absentee ballot up to 7 days before the election, and the county clerk has a week to send it back. Well, that is election day. So we changed that for November. We actually have a deadline of midnight of October 9 for the voter to request an absentee ballot other than in case of a personal medical emergency. So we have an earlier cut-off to apply for the ballot, but that also gives the clerks the ability to get it out there faster.

Mr. JOYCE. [Inaudible] expired. Thank you very much.

Chairman THOMPSON. The gentleman's time has expired. The Chair recognizes the gentle lady from Illinois for 5 minutes, Ms. Underwood.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The integrity of our elections is essential to the preservation of our Republic. The on-going COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the need for greater flexibility in how, when, and where people vote. As I and many of my colleagues have said over and over, no one should be forced to choose between protecting their health and exercising their Constitutional right. That is why it is so important to make sure that Americans can vote from home and trust that their ballot will be delivered and counted.

In addition to its many other essential functions, like delivering medicines to the 80 percent of American veterans who receive prescriptions through the mail, the Postal Service is a critical part of our election infrastructure. During the pandemic, a well-functioning Postal Service is more important than ever for holding a safe and accessible election this fall.

Mr. Dimondstein, I think some people watching this hearing might not know all the ways that postal workers are involved in our electoral process. Can you briefly describe, from a postal worker's perspective, why a functioning Postal Service is so important for a safe and accessible election?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. Well, thank you for the question, Congresswoman. Well, from the standpoint of view of the postal workers, we touch the mail at all aspects. So we are delivering mail to people's homes, and that often goes through—it will go through sortation facilities. It will be trucked to carrier units so the letter carrier can come to your home that day. So clerks, letter carriers, all are touching the mail, and we take that responsibility, that sanctity of the mail, that privacy of the mail, we treat it as if it is our own. On the other side if someone chooses to then mail back that ballot, that gets picked up, it may get—somebody may bring it to a post office and drop it in a box at the post office or give it to the window clerk. Somebody may drop it in a drop box in their neighborhood or in their own mailbox, and the letter carrier will pick it up because mail can be put into the system that way—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Right.

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN [continuing]. And it goes back into the processing plants, and there postal workers are trained to give ballots priority. If it is designed well, it is very noticeable, the mail can be identified, made sure that it is pulled out of the system. Some States, workers have to put the—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you.

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN [continuing]. The voter puts a stamp on it. Other, it is prepaid. That all has to be processed and—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. That is right.

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. So we are involved with the process—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you.

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN [continuing]. The whole way and proud to do it.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Dimondstein. It is clear that the USPS has a leading role to play in this election, and so that is why I am so disappointed that this administration has taken on an effort to undermine this essential service with operational changes that threaten democracy itself.

While I am glad that Postmaster General DeJoy has committed to reversing or postponing some of those changes, I remain concerned about the damage that has already been done.

I recently spoke with Valerie Savage, the president of Local 351, of the American Postal Workers Union chapter in Aurora, Illinois. She described some of the recent operational changes she and her colleagues have observed at the USPS facilities that serve my constituents and others in northern Illinois. Ms. Savage says that previously machines were used to sort the mail so that letter carriers received it organized by the order in which they traveled their route. But now she says those sorting machines have been taken out of service, and so that mail has to be sorted by hand. Ms. Savage estimates that sorting the mail manually takes about 10 times as long as it is used to take the machines, which she says could result in delivery delays of 2 days or more.

Ms. Patrick, if Ms. Savage is correct that mail delivery in northern Illinois could be delayed by 2 days or more, what impact would that have on our State's ability to count every ballot in a timely manner?

Ms. PATRICK. Thank you so much for the question, Representative Underwood, and in fact, I included a figure in my testimony that speaks directly to this issue. Because when we had the stand-up talk from the Postmaster General, there was a directive saying no overtime, no late trips. We, in fact, then saw the pulling of sorting equipment. This is a dramatic shift. Even though some of these activities have happened in the past, this has been a change in tone, a change in the transparency of what is behind changing some of these things. So I asked one of my colleagues—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Right.

Ms. PATRICK [continuing]. Appropriate the figure that shows all of the ways in which it can delay. It can be delayed by 1 day: If a carrier is near the end of their route and their shift is ending, do they leave the ballots in the remaining mailboxes, or are they able to go and get them? If, in fact, they go ahead and complete their route, the truck that is at the mail center, getting ready to go off to the processing plant, do they wait for them or not? We have seen reporting in the last couple of days that the trucks are not waiting, and trucks are leaving empty. So this is not a very good policy to implement just a month before ballots are being mailed, and it has me very concerned.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. I share your concern.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this hearing, and I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much. The Chair recognizes Mr. Garcia from California for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARCIA. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all. This is my first committee hearing. It is an honor to be here. I want to thank Ranking Member Rogers for that very kind introduction.

Look, I just want to start with maybe a comment and go into a few questions. First of all, I want to say that I fully support the letter carriers in our country. The United States Postal Service does a tremendous service for our Nation. In many cases, the folks out there delivering our mail are also veterans, folks who have served on the front lines, and they continue to, frankly, serve on the front lines out there, delivering our mail, and in most cases in a timely fashion in the midst of this COVID environment. So I am a staunch supporter of the letter carriers. My uncle was one for more than 30 years, and I understand the value that the service brings.

This last piece of legislation, this \$25 billion piece of legislation, wasn't the right answer to help our letter carriers. I support overtime. I think the letter carriers and the Nation benefit from the overtime, but this bill didn't allow the post office to make the changes necessary to truly protect our letter carriers in this COVID crisis. So I will just extend the fact that while we—while we also—we can support the carriers and the U.S. Postal Service and vote against this latest bill, they are not mutually exclusive, and I look forward to more meaningful legislation in the future that actually does help the U.S. Postal Service and its carriers.

With that, I will pivot to the election elements of this. I just went through a special election in May where 423,000 ballots were sent out with self-addressed, stamped envelopes. I think we had over 90 percent of those ballots actually returned through the mail, or rather 90 percent of the votes that were counted were through the mail. So I am not necessarily too concerned about the inability of the post office to get the ballots out and returned.

What is more alarming to me—and I think this is an echo of what my colleague from Pennsylvania, Representative Joyce, was getting at—is that especially here in the State of California, the update and frequency of updates to the registration rolls is anemic.

Just prior to my election but unfortunately after the 2018 election, the State of California removed about 1.5 to 1.8 million dead voters or voters who were removed—or moved from California to other States. This is a huge number. So I guess my question is—and what that ended up doing before the removal of those dead voters and folks who had moved was it allowed in L.A. county alone about 112 percent of our population to be registered as voters. That makes no sense. There is no math that allows that. There is no law that tolerates that.

So I guess the question is, what is at the root cause of our inability at the State level to ensure that we are refreshing the registration rolls in a timely fashion, not after elections, but before elections and with enough lead time to make sure that it is being sort-of baked into the election, or fully baked in, in steady-state, before the ballots actually go out. I guess, Secretary Benson, we can start

with you and go from there. I realize you guys are not representing California, but this is a Nation-wide issue.

Ms. BENSON. Yes. Thank you, Congressman. The 3 things I noted about what we have done in Michigan—frequent mailings, automatic voter registration enabling us to checking our rolls, and joining ERIC—I don't believe, and someone will correct me, but I don't believe California is a part of ERIC, and I don't know the details around that, but that has certainly been key in helping us continue to update our rolls in collaboration with other States because people are mobile. So, when there is a National change of address—actually, I just got confirmation, California is not part of ERIC. So that is something that I would recommend—it certainly helped us—as well as mailings and the other things I talked about.

The other thing I will mention about the comparison numbers—you mentioned 112 percent registered—we have to be careful. What we found in Michigan in looking into those numbers is what we are comparing, meaning, if we are using old Census data that may be undercounting a community and then comparing that to actual voter registration numbers, you could get a mismatch of really kind-of almost comparing apples to oranges, that doesn't accurately reflect the percentage of eligible voters who are registered to vote. So again, you know, just would offer that as well. But ERIC and being a part of ERIC has been a key part of our ability to improve consistently the accuracy of our rolls.

Mr. GARCIA. OK. Thank you. I am out of time, but I would love to get the specifics on that. Maybe we can help out the beautiful State of California to get on-board with modern technology. That would be fantastic.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much. Time is expired. I recognize the gentle lady from Michigan, Ms. Slotkin, for 5 minutes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Correa took sort-of the part of my question, which is great. I am just concerned, I guess, as an Army wife and an Army stepmom, that we have got, I think, over 200,000 uniformed military serving overseas. Can you just walk through—I am sorry—again the way that they are going to be able to vote? The problem I have is this idea that they are literally over fighting for the very democracy that we are talking about here today, and because of the delays in getting ballots out and back and the whole thing, I am worried that literally the 200,000 serving abroad and then the extra 700,000 that are serving inside the United States not at their duty station—not at their voting location, excuse me—are going to be completely disenfranchised. So convince me, Secretary Benson—I know this issue is close to your heart—that we are not going to be disenfranchising our veterans, especially serving abroad.

Ms. BENSON. It is a risk, I will just say that, in Michigan because right now, in Michigan, ballots can be electronically delivered to overseas voters but must be returned via the mail. As I mentioned earlier, we need our State legislature to change the law to allow the electronic ballot return securely. This is something that we know other States do. Even at a time like this, where numerous voters living overseas cannot access the mail due to the pandemic, we need solutions, and we need our State legislature to be a part-

ner in developing those solutions because democracy is a team sport and that partnership is key, and there is only so much I have the authority to do or that Congress has the authority to do. We need our State legislature to act.

So, in addition to that, as we wait for them to act, I will note that in many States, the ability of an overseas voter to return their ballot other than through the Postal Service, which is what we are looking for, alternative avenues of return, has more to do with where the overseas voter is living rather than who the voter is, meaning that some laws authorize return options based on whether a voter is living in a hostile fire, imminent danger zone. This would be true, you know, whether the voter is in the military, family of the family, or a civilian overseas, who, you know, based on where they live, the availability of the standard Postal Service, or inavailability of it, requires an additional workaround.

So you know, my office has been asking, since I took office, for a change to this law, to enable more paths. We also hope, you know, that there is opportunities for others to advocate for those paths or to offer alternative ways of individuals to deliver and return those ballots, but it is a critical issue. It is something that we cannot solve alone. But it is something that weighs on my heart greatly because we have to solve it for November.

Ms. PATRICK. Would it be OK if I jump in there?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you. Secretary of State Adams, can you—oh.

Ms. PATRICK. I am sorry.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I just want to shift the topic if I could, if that is all right. Secretary of State Adams, can you help us understand your view of using uniformed military at polling locations? I am concerned about the general issue of either uniformed military or law enforcement being placed in any way at our polling locations or in the administration of our elections. I understand that, in Kentucky, you had the Guard called out in some form or fashion, I don't know exactly how, but can you give us your views since we have heard the President talking about placing law enforcement at polls. Just help me understand where you come at this.

Mr. ADAMS. Thank you, Representative. So, to be clear, the Governor did call out the Guard. We have a great partnership with them, but they were not in uniform, and they served a purely support role. They helped in sanitization. They helped move the equipment around and that sort of thing, but they were not poll workers—that is not even out of uniform. So—and that was an offering that we made—it was voluntary for acceptance—to our counties. About half of our counties said, “Yes, we will take it.” Half said no.

We had a very unfortunate shooting of an individual during a demonstration who unfortunately was killed by a member of the National Guard, and so that came a few weeks before election day, and that was, I think, another reason why there was some reluctance to utilize the Guard even in that sort of limited fashion.

So, in Kentucky, we actually have a law that to be a poll worker, you have to live in the county, absent some sort of special permission. So it is just not really feasible for us in any event, without a change to that law, for us to utilize our National Guard as poll workers. There is also the concern that some people can find that to be intimidating, but we had—

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes. Thank you for that, sir. I appreciate you raising that because I think the specter of the President saying he wanted to bring law enforcement potentially into our elections process, when he tweeted that, the intimidation that comes from having uniformed or law enforcement personnel at polls should not be underestimated. I appreciate your answer on that.

Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I am out of time.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Cleaver, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank you and the Ranking Member for the meeting.

Frankly, I am pleased that you would place this issue on our committee agenda because we are, you know, less than 80 days out from an all-important election. I have a grandson who is upstairs in my home right now in bed with corona. There are 3 of us in the house, and all 3 of us sleeping in separate rooms.

The point I want to make is that this is an awful disease, and we should not force anybody to go stand in line and—making them susceptible to this deadly virus. I get a little emotional talking about it, but I want to ask our panel whether or not they believe that there is such a thing in the world as voter suppression. Just, you know, we can go from left to right.

Ms. BENSON. I will go first on that because we are fresh off of an experience of just that, Congressman. First my sympathies, my condolences, to your family. I know how challenging and uncertain this moment must be healthwise. So my heart goes out to you, and we will keep you in our prayers.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you.

Ms. BENSON. The issue with voter suppression is, as we saw evidence. I believe in data and I believe in, you know, [inaudible] decisions, as we saw first-hand yesterday, [inaudible] remarks that specifically said that, if you vote by mail, which is something [inaudible] so they have [inaudible] bad things will happen that are [inaudible]. In my view, [inaudible] because this is the tip of the iceberg [inaudible] for efforts to try to discourage people from voting one way or another, or voting at all, with false information, [inaudible] scare tactics, that was the case for this particular [inaudible].

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you very much. Let me ask our secretary of state, do you believe that the intelligence community is correct, or do you think they are making up the delivery of that intelligence to us, that not only did the Russians interfere with the last election, but they are already involved in trying to disrupt our—what they want to really do is sow discord in the Nation? But one of the ways they do it is, of course, trying to convince us that democracy doesn't work, voting doesn't work.

So do you believe that that is a truth, that our Intelligence Committee is making all the—all of the intelligence agencies had a meeting at a restaurant and decided to lie to the American public about what the Russians are doing?

Ms. BENSON. Would you like me to—

Mr. CLEAVER. Yes.

Ms. BENSON. Sure, if it was directed at me. We have, been just trying to, you know, cut through the noise and the rhetoric this year and speak directly with those doing the work and have found, you know, that evidence exists, as we all know, and as Congress and the U.S. Senate has found, of clear efforts to interfere with our elections.

What that means for us, as we prepare for November, is that we have got to [inaudible]. We have got to be aware of all the data of what has occurred before, and we speak just directly to our law enforcement agencies, the FBI, and everyone involved in election security. We have asked continuously for the information [inaudible] those who are involved in [inaudible]. So I am confident that [inaudible], that it is not a partisan issue [inaudible]. And we will continue to [inaudible] in what we are doing to protect [inaudible] in collaboration with those at the local, State, and Federal level.

Mr. CLEAVER. I think my time is running out. The reason I—that was not going to be my initial line of questioning, Mr. Chairman, so I apologize. But I just wanted—some of my colleagues who are good and decent people, were critical of you, Mr. Chairman, about why would you place the postal issues on the agenda for Homeland Security—Homeland Security—Homeland Security. If we have an impending invasion by Russia, it would seem to me that this would be an appropriate issue, Mr. Chairman, and so I want to thank you very much for putting this on the agenda.

I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Richmond, for 5 minutes.

Mr. RICHMOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and hopefully I don't have to use all that time, but let me just go to Secretary Adams really quickly and ask, what we saw in Kentucky was a rapidly expanded mail-in voting process. Quick answer, yes or no, would be, did you see wide-spread fraud or abuse in the mail-in ballots?

Mr. ADAMS. No, sir, not in our State.

Mr. RICHMOND. OK. But also I saw some reports that we reduced tremendously the number of polling places. That is also true, right?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, that wasn't my decision, but, yes, we had individual counties make decisions to reduce their locations, which was necessary because the locations weren't available. They were places of worship that were closed due to a stay-at-home order, they were nursing homes and so forth. We also have a drift of poll workers.

Mr. RICHMOND. Let me ask a question in your experience and I will rely on my experience. My experience is that if you want the full participation of voters, you make voting as accessible as possible. So when we reduce polling places, No. 1, we create longer lines, and No. 2, we create more travel burdens for people to get there. Do you agree with that?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, I agree that if the polling locations are available and the poll workers are available, you should open the polls. What we didn't want to have happen in Kentucky, and didn't have happen, is what happened in Wisconsin, which is, they tried to open up sites and people didn't show up, and then the voters were disenfranchised.

Mr. RICHMOND. No, no, I understand that. But I want you to listen to my question very carefully. Do you agree that the burden of traveling further could likely reduce participation in the democratic process? Do you also agree that the long lines that would ensue were also a burden to the democratic process because people may or may not have the time to wait in line, people may not have the stamina to wait in line, and the burden of travel to get there? So do you agree that that is also a burden to the democratic participation in the democratic process?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, I certainly do agree with that. It is less of a burden if you have got absentee balloting available, but, sure, it is a burden.

Mr. RICHMOND. Let me jump just really quickly to—and everybody can answer on this—just the ability of the Federal Government to help you, CISA for example, in terms of making sure that your election is both safe, transparent, and that we have back-up to ensure that the election results are what the people's will dictates.

Ms. BENSON. I will respond to that, if I could, Congressman, and thank you for your service and your questions. I think, in our experience, we have had a great working relationship. The only challenge—and I think this is worth mentioning—is, who hears first when there is a problem? Is it the local election official, or is it the State? Myself and my colleagues have worked to kind-of make sure the State knows about it when a vendor we use or when a local jurisdiction in our State encounters a problem. I think we have gotten a little bit better on that line of communication, but just so that you all know, that has been a consistent conversation we have been having Nation-wide among my colleagues and the representatives of CISA to make sure, again, that we know at the State level what is going on in our States.

Mr. RICHMOND. Got it. Let me—and thank you for that answer. Let me just ask one very quick question, and if everybody could answer yes or no, it would be very helpful—have you in your experience so far seen any evidence or indication that Russia is trying to interfere in an election in our particular State? We can start with Mr. Adams or whoever wants to answer, but it would be very helpful if you could just give me a yes or no on that.

Mr. ADAMS. Respectfully, Representative, I don't feel comfortable getting any into anything Classified today. I will just go back to my prior comment that our doorknobs are being rattled.

Mr. RICHMOND. Well, let me ask you this, in your experience—and I would assume that, Mr. Adams, you are elected, right?

Mr. ADAMS. I am.

Mr. RICHMOND. I would assume that, Ms. Benson, you are elected, right?

Ms. BENSON. Yes, I am.

Mr. RICHMOND. So let me just pose this question because this is factually correct. Let's assume that if someone Googled or went to the website for Antifa, and it was redirected to the Adams website, or the secretary of state website for Ms. Benson, that that is—and it is—the website for Antifa is owned by the Russians—that that is Russian interference in an election so that is a factual basis. So,

if that was redirected to your websites, would you all personally view that as Russian interference in your election?

Ms. BENSON. I would say yes. You know, I would just say also, you know, past reports have indicated that there have been, as we all know, Nation-wide efforts and attempts in various states. We have really successfully protected our State against any infiltration or effects of efforts or attempts, but that doesn't mean—

Mr. RICHMOND. Excuse me. The question is still the same. I mean, in my district, if someone went to a website that was unpopular, let's say the Ku Klux Klan, and it redirected them to my website, that is an adverse action to my reelection. So my question is, if Antifa website, owned by the Russians, was redirected to the Adams campaign or the secretary, Ms. Benson, your campaign, would you see that as negative interference—

Ms. BENSON. Yes.

Mr. RICHMOND [continuing]. From the Russians?

Ms. BENSON. Yes.

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Adams.

Mr. ADAMS. Yes. That would be a dirty trick. I can't tell you that is the thing that keeps me up at night though.

Mr. RICHMOND. Well, thank you for that answer.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time, and I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much. Let me remind the Members that when you are not talking, to please mute yourself because some of the feedback we are getting is some of you left your mikes open.

The Chair recognizes the gentlelady from New York for 5 minutes, Ms. Clarke.

Ms. CLARKE. I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I thank our Ranking Member and panelists for their expert witness today. My first question will be directed toward Secretary Benson and Ms. Patrick. As State and local officials work to administer primaries this spring, many chose to rapidly expand access to absentee ballots or vote by mail, including my home State of New York.

As COVID-19 continues to spread, it is imperative that we continue expanding these options for the November elections, particularly in light of the admonition we have all received that COVID may have a resurgence as to whether—changes in people move indoors.

In addition, however, we also need to learn from our experience in the spring. New York's challenges implementing vote by mail or absentee voting made National news, but New York was hardly the only State that struggled. This past weekend, *The Washington Post* reported that more than 500,000 ballots were rejected in primaries held across 23 different States.

In contrast, some States have successfully conducted their elections exclusively by mail for many years.

So, Secretary Benson, what are some of the reasons that a ballot can be invalidated, and how do the rules on assessing the validity of a ballot vary by State?

Ms. BENSON. That is such an important question, Congresswoman, and that is actually one of the things that keeps me up at night as we prepare for November.

We have seen in our August primary—now, again, 2.5 million people voted; 1.6 million voted by mail—just over 10,000 ballots were unable to be counted that were mailed in, for various reasons. Of those 10,694 ballots that were unable to be counted, 6,400 of them, the vast majority, couldn't be counted because they were sent in prior to election day but received in the 2 days that followed. That is a big deal. Those votes should have counted. In my view, voters should not be disenfranchised for doing everything they are supposed to do if another system, particularly the Postal Service, fails to deliver their ballot on time. That is why we increased the secure drop boxes that we have been putting in place across the State, but it is also critical for us that we become a State that if something is postmarked by election day but received in the day or 2 following, that it should still count.

Now, the other major reason why those ballots didn't count was because they were sent in through the mail, and on the signature check on the ballot envelope in which the ballot is placed, that voters must sign outside, and that signature is then matched with the signature we have on file. In about 2,225 of those 10,000 ballots, about 2,000 either had a signature missing or a signature didn't match. We need to require our clerks to follow up when they get a ballot without a signature or a mismatch to identify any irregularities or confirm that voter's identity and make sure it counts.

Those are 2 things that we have asked our State legislature to act on, but they have not. But if those are acted on by November, that will ensure that the vast majority of the ballots that previously were unable to be counted will be able to be counted in November's election.

Ms. CLARKE. Thank you, Secretary Benson.

According to the *Post* article, common processes “tend to disproportionately invalidate ballots from youths—younger voters and voters of color.”

Ms. Patrick, is that true? If so, why is that the case?

Ms. PATRICK. So I think it is absolutely important to know that it is true. The No. 1 reason is a late ballot. The No. 2 reason for rejection across the country has to do with the signature being missing, and that could be younger voters not signing it, not knowing where to sign, and/or the signature changing.

So we know that signatures mature around the time you are 25 years of age or older, and so the message to voters is to be consistent. So be consistent with the way you sign. If you have what's often referred to as like a throw-away signature, that is fine, but just be consistent with what signature you are using so it doesn't get rejected.

The other critical element in the late aspect of the ballots is that the Postal Service recommends you put your ballot in the mail 1 week before it is due, and yet 22 States allow for a voter to request their ballot after that time line. So—I wrote about this in 2016 called *The New Reality of Voting by Mail*—first-class mail delivery is 2 to 5 days, and so voters who are putting their ballots in the mail on Monday or on Tuesday on election day, if a postmark does not count in that State, their ballot may not count because 1-day delivery is something of the past.

So it is very important that voters not focus on the deadlines because those deadlines set them up to fail and set false expectations. But, instead, as Secretary Adams referenced, focus on the first day to mail and being the first person to vote. So don't wait to request it and don't wait to return it.

Ms. CLARKE. Mr. Chairman, it is troubling to me that a ballot can be rejected because of a relatively minor error or due to circumstances outside the voter's control. Members of Congress must better understand what we should be asking our State and local election officials to make sure that no voter is disenfranchised because of a preventable ballot error.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the hearing, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much to the lady from New York. I too have a real concern on that, and I think the committee will get together and see if we can recommend some policy changes that we might be able to get implemented into law to have some continuity of how that process works.

The Chair recognizes the gentlelady from Nevada, Ms. Titus, for 5 minutes.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

As you know, and I suspect some members of the panel know, Nevada just passed in special session AB4, which has to do with elections, where everybody who is an active registered voter will receive a ballot, and then there are more opportunities to vote in person so that you don't have to be overcrowded during this pandemic time. Despite that, we are being sued on some bogus constitutional grounds. Even our Republican secretary of state has asked that the suit be dropped.

I would ask the panel if they are experiencing this or know of other secretaries of state who have seen this kind of chilling effect or attempt to delegitimize elections taking place through the courts and how they might suggest we deal with it.

Second, Mr. Adams mentioned briefly—and I would like to follow up on this—that it is very hard to find poll workers. Most of the workers are seniors, and they are reluctant to put themselves out there in the time of the virus because they are going to be facing a lot of people. What are you doing to find poll workers, getting them to show up for testing and be sure that they come on election day so you don't have a crisis at these polling places?

Third, many of the arenas around the country are saying—I think you've got State Farm Arena, Milwaukee, the Pistons, the Dodgers, here in Nevada we have got the new Raiders stadium as a place where kind of a massive one-stop voting place on election day. Are there problems with that? Do you see that as a good thing? How can we make that work?

Thank you, and I will ask anybody who wants to respond.

Ms. PATRICK. I will jump in very quickly on the cases question because I know that the secretaries have answers for the other 2, and that is that there are currently more than 200 cases around election administration around the country. So the answer is yes, there are many cases around many options, whether it has to do with drop boxes or sending out ballots to all voters.

Ms. BENSON. I will add to that because I have been very much involved in the effort to enable sports arenas to be utilized, in places where it makes sense to do so, for election purposes. These could be for voting, for early voting, or as we are doing at Ford Field in Detroit, Ford Field, our football arena, will be a place where ballots are secured and processed and prepared for recounting at the end of the night.

So in many ways, the sports industry is filling a significant need that democracy has this year in, not just physical spaces and the need for more physical spaces to vote, but also people. So we are proud that here in Detroit—and, again, I have been a part of conversations in many markets and with election administrators around the country to encourage our sports teams to also provide poll workers, give their employees the day off, and empower athletes to be voices for serving as poll workers. The More Than a Vote effort that LeBron James has led that I have been an advisor on since its beginning has really been a leader on both of these fronts and has been one of the reasons why we have been able to recruit close to 10,000 election workers in our State that has enabled us to keep in our August primary all of our precincts open and also, importantly, fill unexpected vacancies at the last minute, when poll workers show up or feel uncomfortable showing up on election day. We have recruited and trained hundreds on standby, which we used in our August primary, we will have ready for November as well.

The people and the places that make our democracy work are really critical needs this year, and it has been gratifying to see the way in which many of our industries, in particular our sports industry, has stepped up to fill those needs.

Mr. ADAMS. Hi, Representative. So I will try to get to all 3 of your questions if I have time. First, the sports venues are a great idea. We used those in Kentucky in our primary. We used Kroger Field where the University of Wildcats play football. We used our State fair center where we have our State fair every year. It is a gigantic venue.

To be clear, those shouldn't be the only locations in the county where you can go vote, but there should be vote centers available that are easy to get to. We actually had free transportation to these places in the primary. So it is a great model.

With regard to poll workers, after I won in November, I testified to the legislature we had a crisis in getting poll workers. This is before anyone even heard of coronavirus. It is a problem anyway. We have got a whole aging generation of baby boomers who are poll workers disproportionately, and they are aging out even without regard to COVID-19. So part of my challenge has been to try to get younger people to step up, millennials and my generation, Gen X, get them to be civic- and community-oriented and get them to volunteer as poll workers. We have seen some success from that. We have been very active in the messaging on that. We opened up a portal to volunteer to be a poll worker. We have found thousands of people already in 5 of our counties tell me they have already got enough poll workers in locations to open up all of their precincts on election day. So that is pretty good considering it is only late August.

Your last point on litigation, I will tell you, I am an attorney, I did election law professionally prior to coming to this office, and I have never seen a litigation environment like what we had this year. You see a lot of cookie-cutter lawsuits around the country. I have been sued 12 times. I have been pretty successful so far, but I've been sued 12 times, primarily on the—from the left side. You have got litigation from right-wing groups, from left-wing groups that are trying to get the election rules more to their liking. Look, if they have got a good argument, right, but I think that these things should be decided democratically. If a court makes up the election rules, I don't think the public will accept that.

I think why it worked so well in Kentucky was is that we had a Democratic Governor and a Republican secretary of state working through the critical process to write the rules instead of it being up to a judge to decide.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the hearing.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

The Chair recognizes the gentlelady from New Jersey, Mrs. Watson Coleman for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I want to thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This has been a very helpful and illuminating committee meeting, and I am grateful to hear the testimony of all of our excellent witnesses, and thank you.

It is shameful that we should have this much discussion right now how to protect our vote from the shenanigans, particularly the undermining that takes place coming out of the President's mouth. We should all be trying to figure out, in this emergency situation, how to facilitate voting.

New Jersey is one of those States like Nevada that made a decision to send ballots to active voters as opposed to the additional step of requesting a ballot and then getting a ballot. We are the one—we are also one of the States that is being sued, and that is a shameful use, expenditure of the President's power and his authority and resources. Doggone it, I am angry.

But here is a question I would like to ask both of the secretaries of state and Ms. Patrick. Did both of you testify that you can process ballots that come in through early voting apparatus prior to election day?

Ms. BENSON. We cannot in Michigan. We cannot begin even opening the envelopes until election day morning, which is a big issue for us that we have asked our State legislature to address.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you.

And you, Secretary Adams, in Kentucky, can you process the ballot before election day?

Mr. ADAMS. We can. We can process it if we run it through the machine, but we don't pull out the machines until the polls close is how we avoid any premature disclosure of the results.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. OK. So that would be the night of the election then, right?

Mr. ADAMS. That is when we push the button and have the total, but weeks—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes.

Mr. ADAMS [continuing]. Before that, we will process the ballots.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Ms. Patrick, I want to address this issue because I, honest to God, believe that we need to know the results of the election as quickly as possible to avoid any of the sort-of continued illegal activities on the part of this administration to impact the outcome or to suppress the vote—the legitimate vote. So I am—in New Jersey, I want to talk to the Governor’s office about allowing us to process the ballot before election day.

I want to know, can this be done, Ms. Patrick, in a way that secures the vote, ensures the confidentiality, and makes sure and ensures that there is no tampering, based upon your knowledge in working in this field? Do you have a response to that?

Ms. PATRICK. I definitely do. I will say, not only is it what the majority of the States do that process absentee and mail-in ballots before election day, it is the best practice. The Bipartisan Policy Center came out with the task force recommendations to allow States to begin processing those ballots at least 1 week in advance, and the majority of States do.

So in reality, on election night, for most of the country, when the holograms start showing all the results, in the vast majority of States, those are, in fact, vote by mail, absentee ballots, early in-person ballots. The few precincts that have come in right as the polls have closed, those usually come in later.

So there are a handful of very critical States. Secretary Benson is one of them, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, those are 3 States that do not allow the processing before election day. So we will not have those results until later if their States do not allow them to begin that pre-processing.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes. Well, history tells us we would like to hear those results as early as possible.

Could you just answer the question about what are some of the mechanisms to secure the vote, to ensure there is no tampering, and to mitigate leaks that come out of those who are working in that process? I think that is very important for us to know.

Ms. PATRICK. You know, absolutely best practices established in the securing of the daily totals, because many places will start counting a week or 2 weeks in advance, and many places will have multiple tabulators. So you never accumulate all of those votes until the polls have closed and you are able to do so. Also, there are many restrictions. CISA has been a great partner in explaining physical security of tabulation centers, the securing of the electric components as far as what those results are tallied onto every day.

In Arizona, we had 24/7 cameras on our tabulation centers, so anybody could go to on the website and watch that tabulation center in the dead of night or when it was very busy during the day. So transparency and documentation and chain of custody, all elements of our voting process, are critical, and those are very well laid out, and those best practices are definitely available for all election officials.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. So for someone like me who wants to have that information before I make that call, where do I go and get this information? I am concerned about the security, the processing, no leaking, no tampering, you know.

Ms. PATRICK. I think that the CISA website has some very good structures laid out on exactly what the checklist would be for se-

curing those various channels. The EAC, of course, as a clearinghouse has additional security information. Then, last, reaching out to secretaries of state in the States that don't do this already because, more than likely, they have put forth what they would like to do in the ability to adopt some of those best practices.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back, and thank you for this hearing.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

The Chair recognizes the gentlelady from California, Ms. Barragán, for 5 minutes.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this very critical hearing. I am hearing from a lot of constituents about the delay of their mail and the concern about election security and whether their vote will count, so this is so critically important.

Mr. Dimondstein, thank you so much for being here today. Thank you to all our witnesses for being here.

My questions, Mr. Dimondstein, are directed to you. After Postmaster General Louis DeJoy testified earlier this week before the Committee on Oversight and Reform, you stated, "it is an indisputable fact mail postal customers have witnessed a degrading and slowing of mail service since Postmaster General Louis DeJoy instituted changes in mid-July."

What have been the consequences for customers of the slowing of mail service?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. Well, thank you, Congresswoman. Can you hear me OK?

Ms. BARRAGÁN. I can.

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. OK. Because my computer is saying something funny.

The consequences for the customers is that a lot of vital supplies, from medicines to our veterans and seniors, financial transactions, we have reports from customers they have had late fees because their bills didn't arrive in time. We have had reports from customers that mortgage payments didn't arrive on time. We definitely have had reports from both within the VA, kind-of whistleblower reports, but also some from veterans themselves.

We have concrete—and it is largely anecdotal, but it is coming from all over the country, where our own postal workers have researched and tried to find out what has happened to people's mail and found it stuck in the system. So it needs to be fixed and fixed quickly, and it can be fixed.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. What changes in the postal operations do you attribute the degradation and slowing of the mail service you and your members have observed?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. I think it is hard to identify one thing, but I would put at the top of the list the change in transportation, because now this focus, and almost a fetish, on the truck has to leave on time from a sorting location facility for carry unit and back. So at 6 a.m. in the morning, it has got to go at 6 a.m. or a few minutes earlier because it looks better on paper.

But the real life in the post office is we want to get all the mail in that truck. So, to me, it is not important, to the customer it is not as important, whether there is a 97 percent on-time rating now with the trucks leaving and arriving on time. The question is, is

your mail on that truck or did it need to wait another 7 or 8 minutes for everything to get loaded on.

Also, there is a constant need for extra trips because sometimes mail doesn't fit on trucks. Those are being canceled, and the system backs up pretty quickly. So those are things.

You also need enough work hours, however they are worked, to make sure that the work gets done.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. One of the things that I have been hearing is that some customers in my district get no mail on 1 day or 2 days, and that is something new and different for them as opposed to just a delay. Would you say that is because of the cut that was done to hours, in that maybe a letter carrier didn't get to them?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. On that, I can't answer. We don't actually represent the letter carriers, but it actually probably goes back to the transportation as well, because if that sorted mail doesn't get in that truck from the processing sorting facilities, then that letter carrier cannot get it to the customers.

So a lot of it comes back to the transportation issue and making sure, again, that enough hours are worked to get the work done.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. OK. In a statement released on August 18, the Postmaster General said, "there are some long-standing operational initiatives that predate my arrival at the Postal Service that have been raised as areas of concern as the Nation prepares to hold an election in the midst of a devastating pandemic. To avoid even the appearance of any impact on election mail, I am suspending these initiatives until after the election is concluded."

Do you know what the long-standing operational initiatives are that Mr. DeJoy was referring to in his statement and how long before his arrival at the Postal Service did they begin?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. No, I don't. I believe he was referring to specifically the reduction of mail sortation machines and the blue boxes, but I honestly don't know.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. OK. The Postmaster General said that overtime has and will continue to be approved as needed. Was overtime cut or eliminated before August 18? If so, what changes have you seen in the approval of overtime since Mr. DeJoy issued his statement?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. The best we can tell, Congresswoman, it was put into writing that there was such directives, but it was implemented very unevenly. In some areas, overtime was still worked. In some areas, it wasn't. But even where overtime was worked, often the total hours of work was reduced. The key at the end of the day, to me, is not how the hours get worked, whether it is—the Postal Service is understaffed, so they can hire, they can work overtime. We are in a pandemic. We have had 40,000 postal workers quarantined. Somebody has to make up those hours as well.

So what we see is still fairly significant levels of overtime in some areas and in some areas where it has been banned. Where it has been banned, we know for sure that that is having an impact on mail backing up.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Well, thank you, and thank you to the men and women of the Postal Service.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. Thank you.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much. The gentledady's time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the gentledady from Florida, Mrs. Demings, for 5 minutes.

Chairman THOMPSON. Is Mrs. Demings on or has she left?

Mrs. DEMINGS. Mr. Chairman, can you hear me?

Chairman THOMPSON. We got you now.

Mrs. DEMINGS. OK. Let's restart the clock, please. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of our witnesses.

I just want to start here, the U.S. Postal Service, as we heard earlier, has a 91 percent approval rating. I think that sends a pretty strong message about the job that these men and women do and have done for a lot of years. But we are talking about today the Postal Service being able to do their job and voters being able to vote during a public health pandemic.

I am somewhat disappointed that it appears some of my colleagues on this committee seem more concerned about what American voters may do than they have showed any concern about Russia interference, past or present, in our elections.

Based on the President's own admissions, as the Chairman pointed out, I am totally convinced that this President is trying to undermine the 2020 election and sees the crippling of the United States Postal Service as a part of that strategy. Every Member on this committee should be concerned about that.

Ms. Patrick, there was a discussion earlier about disinformation. In your testimony, you identified the increasing role of philanthropy in analyzing election data and establishing best practices and countering misinformation to make sure that honest election information is moving forward. As you know, in the Election Security Act, led by Chairman Thompson, it would require the President to create a bipartisan commission and a National strategy to protect U.S. democratic institutions against cyber attacks, influence operations, disinformation campaigns.

Could you give me your opinion about establishing such a commission?

Ms. PATRICK. Certainly. So I am predisposed to appreciate commissions. I did serve on President Obama's Presidential Commission on Election Administration. As long as the commission is put forth in a truly bipartisan, nonpartisan way, and if the Members are selected because of their expertise and not because of who they maybe know, that is the real key to that sort of a commission.

So when we had the PCEA, we came out with a report, and often these commission reports just sit on a shelf and grow dust and get dusty. But because of the Members of the committee, because the recommendations were practical and actionable and held everyone accountable, whether it was something that the Federal Government needed to do, the State government, or something that, in fact, a local official could pick up and implement on their own volition, it was very well received. To this day, I think many of the recommendations we suggested are, in fact, why we are in a better place than we were, you know, so many years ago—or not that many years ago, rather.

So I think as long as the Members of the commission are——

Mrs. DEMINGS. Bipartisan and bring expertise.

Thank you so much, Ms. Patrick.

To Mr. Dimondstein, you know, a lot of the discussion centers around the timely delivery and return of ballots if we are going to be able to make this work. You know, there were some challenges during the primary, are we going to be able to make this work during the general election.

On the one hand, some Postal Service encourages States to send ballots at the first-class mail rate, others at the marketing mail rate. But the bottom line is, I know there has been discussion about getting the ballots returned as quickly as possible. Some have even talked about election mail logos that would clearly identify ballots that needed to have a priority status.

Could you talk a little bit about what is actually going on on the ground and what direction you have been given or your workers have been given from the U.S. Postal Service as it pertains to this issue?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. Well, I think the most encouraging sign is that the new Postmaster General, under oath before Congress, did commit that all ballots will be treated as first-class mail, no matter what rate of mail they are mailed at. That is an encouragement.

Mrs. DEMINGS. He did commit that?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. Yes.

Ms. DEMINGS. That is encouraging. What was the practice—he just said that theory a few days ago. What has been the practice on the ground as it pertains to ballots and their first class—

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. Ballots—you know, the Postal Service doesn't run elections; the States do. The Postal Service does try to work with States on ballot design. That helps a lot. They try to work with States on using intelligent bar code systems which tracks a ballot to the voter, back from the voter. So that is where you have to have the resources and the commitment from the National leadership of management at the Postal Service and the relationship with the States that some of the secretaries of state have testified to.

On the ground, once the ballots start falling, then you have to have good training of the employees, the people that we represent and the other postal unions do—

Mrs. DEMINGS. Have you received any directives from the Postmaster General since this hearing last week?

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. No.

Ms. DEMINGS. OK.

Mr. DIMONDSTEIN. No. We haven't gotten any directives yet, but we do have a joint task force with the 4 postal unions and postal management on this very issue that I think has its first meeting on September 3 or somewhere thereabouts. So we are going to be very proactive as postal workers, because we have always moved heaven and Earth to make sure those ballots get there and—

Ms. DEMINGS. Thank you so much. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

I thank the witnesses for their valuable testimony and the Members for their questions.

Let me also say to our witnesses, you have been very, very enlightening to the Members, as well as the public, about the confidence in our election system, that this system of picking our lead-

ers is so important to our democracy. I want to personally thank you for you sharing that that system of election is a system where local people participate, local individuals work the polls and, for the most part, our system of mail-in balloting works. All that we have been hearing from the White House and other places about how fraught with fraud and abuse this system is, the testimony today reflects just the opposite.

So part of our oversight responsibility is to get to the facts. Again, I thank you for helping us pursue accurate information.

Members of the committee may have additional questions, however, for the witnesses, and we ask that you respond expeditiously in writing to those questions.

Without objection, the committee's record shall be kept open for 10 days.

Hearing no further business, the subcommittee stands adjourned. [Whereupon, at 5:40 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

