

Conservation Voters: Propose changes to voting system

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MADISON - This week's election, which was held during a global pandemic and under a stay-at-home order from the Governor, is a dire indication that democracy in Wisconsin is broken - and that it must be fixed.

"When thousands of people across the state are forced to vote in person at great risk to their own personal safety and the safety of all of us, it's crystal clear this is an emergency situation. And it has risen to the level of life or death," said Executive Director Kerry Schumann. "This latest move by Republican leadership in the legislature - particularly Speaker Robin Vos and Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald - is the most extreme extension of their concerted and long running campaign to deny people a voice in their own government."

Wisconsin Conservation Voters has put together a lifeline for Wisconsin's democracy. It's a list of changes that must be made to our electoral process as soon as possible. Wisconsinites deserve to have fair, safe, and open elections.

To that end, Wisconsin Conservation Voters proposes Wisconsin adopt the following measures:

- Mail a ballot to all registered voters automatically before each election, ideally 30 days before the election date. Voters should not be required to have a witness or provide proof of an ID to request or return their ballot.
- Allow voters to return ballots multiple ways: through the mail, the use of secure drop boxes, and by dropping off at polling locations on the day of the election.
- Every municipality should have a minimum number of polling locations within their community based on the size of the population, located in areas that can

serve all populations in the municipality and allow voters to register and vote quickly and efficiently if they choose to vote in person on election day.

- Every municipality should offer in-person access to early voting and voter registration, as well as ballot drop boxes for several weeks before Election Day.
- Voter registration should be as easy as possible through automatic voter registration in schools or at the DMV. Voters should also be able to register in person on Election Day and during early voting periods.
- All voters should remain on the voter rolls unless there is an action by the voter that indicates they have moved, or through government records (such as death records) that would indicate they are no longer eligible to vote. Wisconsin should not use passive efforts to remove voters such as through returned postcards or past voting history, which are notoriously unreliable and unfair.
- The government should fund public education efforts to ensure that all citizens are aware of how our voting process works and how they can participate.
- Citizens for whom English is a second language should have access to language assistance for voting. This should include access to ballots and elections materials in their native language.

“From gerrymandering districts to consolidate their power, to stripping the governor’s office of crucial powers, to voter ID laws and complicated proof of residence requirements, these unceasing, unrelenting attempts to deny Wisconsinites their most fundamental right has reached its pinnacle,” Schumann said. “The dangerous debacle we saw this week cannot happen again.”