Rep. Hebl: Voting in the time of COVID-19

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By all accounts, Wisconsin's August 11 partisan primary appears to have come and gone without a hitch. We were able to learn from the confusion that surrounded April's election, and it seems that across the state absentee voting went smoothly and in person voting was done safely. While of course I would prefer that the pandemic was in our rearview mirror, I am glad to know that Wisconsinites were able to safely and relatively easily exercise their right to vote despite the circumstances.

However, there appears to be a plot by the Trump administration to throw a wrench in the works in an attempt to secure his reelection. He and his cronies have been sabotaging the United States Postal Service to try to slow down mailing and disenfranchise mail in voters, who lately have been trending Democratic. Indeed, the most recent Marquette Poll shows that, of those that plan to vote by mail in the November election, 81% plan to vote for Joe Biden, and just 14% plan to vote to reelect the President.

The new Postmaster General has begun to institute changes that are slowing delivery times, for no good reason. They are also removing sorting machines in post offices, with no real explanation. These changes are seemingly pointless, and it increasingly looks like Trump is attempt to sabotage the process by which many plan to vote this fall.

There has long been a push to privatize the US Postal Service, with many citing the fact that it loses money each year. But what you don't often hear is that the USPS loses money because of a bill passed in 2006. Republican majorities in the House and Senate passed a bill that required the USPS to pre-fund 75 years' worth of retirement benefits- something no other agency has to do. They were sabotaging

the USPS then so they could privatize it; they are sabotaging it now to win an election.

Moreover, that the USPS loses money is not relevant to its purpose. It is a *service*; it was not created to make money. Nobody complains that the Department of Defense isn't making a profit; why is the USPS held to a different standard? The USPS is immensely popular, with more than 90% of Americans viewing it positively. You can send mail relatively quickly throughout the country for cheap. To sabotage to try to win an election is short-sighted and undemocratic.

That being said, it is still easy to vote absentee in Wisconsin. If you are uncomfortable sending your ballot in the mail or worry that it may not arrive in time, you can drop it off at your local city, village, or town hall. You can also visit myvote.wi.gov to request your ballot, check its mailing status, and make sure that it has been received. The general election in in less than three months- it is better to be prepared early so that you will have time to ensure that your ballot is received and counted. You can even go to myvote.wi.gov right now to request to receive your ballot, though it will not arrive until closer to the election.