

# Rep. Kitchens: Commission approves ballot proposal

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MADISON, Wis. – Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) is pleased that the Wisconsin Elections Commission has implemented one of the provisions in his bipartisan Emergency Elections Bill by agreeing to send absentee ballot applications to 2.7 million registered voters ahead of the November election.

The applications will not be mailed to nearly 528,000 electors who have already requested absentee ballots and close to 158,000 others who are believed to have moved since they last voted.

“To be clear, these mailings will only include applications and not the actual ballots,” Rep. Kitchens said. “To receive an absentee ballot, you will need to fill out and return your application and follow all of the state’s voter ID laws. By doing it this way, I am confident that we can protect both the health of our citizens during a pandemic and the integrity of our elections.”

Rep. Kitchens supports the Elections Commission’s decision, in part, because of the anticipated influx of absentee ballots for the November election. Historically, in a typical election, about 6 percent of Wisconsin voters cast an absentee ballot by mail. For the April election, around 75 percent voted absentee and that number is expected to be even higher in November.

“Furthermore, the two largest counties in our state – Milwaukee and Dane – have already announced that they are planning on sending absentee ballot applications to all of their registered electors,” Rep. Kitchens said. “To make things more fair and equitable, all of Wisconsin’s voters should be offered the same accommodations.”

Even with the mailing of 2.7 million absentee ballot applications, polling locations across Wisconsin will still be open for the Nov. 3 election. Rep. Kitchens believes this move is vitally important because it allows for the state to preserve its same-day voter registration law.

As part of the commission's decision, barcodes will be placed on the absentee ballot envelopes, giving voters the opportunity to track their ballots throughout the entire mailing process. Additionally, the commission has set aside \$4.1 million in federal funding to alleviate the financial strain that local municipal clerk's offices will face with the increase in absentee ballots. Those two measures are also proposed in Rep. Kitchens' Emergency Elections Bill.