

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin, colleagues: Call for \$3.6 billion to expand vote-by-mail, early voting in CARES 2 relief package

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin joined her colleagues, led by Senators Chris Coons (D-DE), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Ron Wyden (D-OR), in writing a [letter](#) to House and Senate leaders, urging them to include \$3.6 billion to help states expand vote-by-mail and early voting in the CARES 2 COVID-19 relief package.

*“Officials in sixteen states have already postponed presidential primary elections or transitioned their elections to all mail-in voting. We must take action now to plan for upcoming elections. Voters across Wisconsin can attest to the fact that failure to enact reforms and provide additional resources to states will result in widespread chaos and disenfranchisement of voters,”* **the Senators wrote to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer.**

*“This is not a partisan issue – this is an American issue. The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy – a right that generations of Americans before us have fought to secure, and a right that we must protect now,”* **the Senators continued.**

The letter is available [here](#) and below.

In March, Senators Baldwin, Coons, Klobuchar, and Wyden and introduced the *Natural Disaster and Emergency Ballot Act of 2020* to expand no-excuse

absentee vote-by-mail to all states, extend early in-person voting in every state to at least 20 days, and reimburse states for additional costs in administering elections during the pandemic.

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leaders Schumer, McConnell, and McCarthy:

As Congress prepares a fourth stimulus package to help our nation recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19, we also need to do more to ensure our democracy is prepared to overcome the challenges brought on by this pandemic. The \$400 million in election funding that was included in the third stimulus package is a critical first step, but states need far more resources to protect the remaining primaries and the November elections.

Republican and Democratic election officials across the country have expressed concern that this pandemic will affect their ability to administer safe elections. Officials in sixteen states have already postponed presidential primary elections or transitioned their elections to all mail-in voting. We must take action now to plan for upcoming elections. Voters across Wisconsin can attest to the fact that failure to enact reforms and provide additional resources to states will result in widespread chaos and disenfranchisement of voters.

As medical experts recommend that Americans remain at home, in-person voting on Election Day, where masses of people gather at specified precinct locations, could pose a substantial risk of increasing the spread of the virus. Experts have also warned that the U.S. could face a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the fall, so we must prepare accordingly. States need resources to scale vote-by-mail, expand early in-person voting, hire and train poll workers, and ensure everyone has access to online mail-in ballot requests and voter registration. By implementing these measures, we can help ensure Americans are able to safely participate in our democracy. Nobody should have to choose between their health and their right to vote.

That's why the next relief bill Congress passes must include significant funding – \$ 3.6 billion – to help states ensure our elections are safe and accessible. The National Association of Secretaries of State has also raised serious concerns regarding some of the provisions associated with the \$400 million in the third COVID-19 supplemental. Secretaries have noted that the twenty percent match requirement is

particularly problematic. Congress must ensure that election officials can readily access the emergency resources they need to meet this threat head-on.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that you prioritize the following in any subsequent COVID-19 related funding:

- Removing the match requirement and other burdensome provisions that prevent election officials from immediate and easy access to funding.
- Providing \$3.6 billion in additional resources for states, and critical funding for the Election Assistance Commission to distribute the funds.
- Enacting election reforms, like those found in the *Natural Disaster and Emergency Ballot Act of 2020*, to make voting during a pandemic safe and easy.
- This is not a partisan issue – this is an American issue. The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy – a right that generations of Americans before us have fought to secure, and a right that we must protect now.

Sincerely,