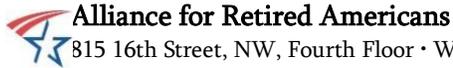




FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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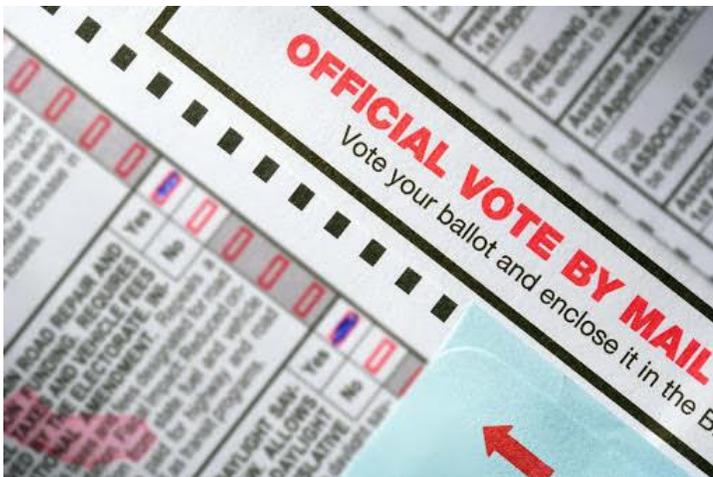
June 19, 2020

Barriers to Absentee Voting for Minnesota's August Primary Lifted as a Result of Minnesota Alliance Lawsuit

In a significant voting rights case affecting hundreds of thousands of Minnesota voters, the Minnesota Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund and three of its members reached a settlement with the Secretary of State of Minnesota this week [that will protect the rights of older voters and all Minnesotans who vote by mail](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Secretary of State agreed to the two demands by the Minnesota Alliance and its members for the August 11, 2020 primary:

- All mail ballots from registered voters will be accepted without requiring that a witness sign them; and
- Ballots received within two days after Election Day will be accepted, as long as they are postmarked by Election Day.



The consent decree was signed by Judge **Sara Grewing** on Wednesday and can be found [here](#). The two day extension for ballots to be received by the county Elections Offices is a function of when the ballots need to be counted for the canvass; in a general election, this time period would be much longer. This settlement only applies to the August primary.

"This is a common sense win for democracy and the voters of Minnesota. All voters should be able to vote by mail and know that their ballot will be counted," said **Richard**

Fiesta, Alliance Executive Director. "The agreement is especially critical for seniors who are most at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic and who need to vote by mail to protect their health."

"The right to vote is sacred and older Americans take this civic responsibility very seriously," said **Michael Madden**, President of the Minnesota Alliance Educational Fund and a registered voter in

Chisago County. “The state’s absentee ballot requirements put us in an impossible position of choosing to protect our health or casting a ballot that we are certain will count.”

The individual plaintiffs are Minnesota Alliance members **Teresa Maples** of Red Wing, a registered voter in Goodhue County; **Gary Severson** of Chaska, Minnesota; and **Mary Samson** of Newport, Minnesota. The lawsuit includes one other individual plaintiff.

The Alliance, working with its state chapters, has filed lawsuits to protect vote by mail and absentee voters in Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, in addition to Minnesota this year.

Alliance Supports Critical Save Our Post Office Day of Action



On June 23 thousands of Americans will participate in actions to demand that Congress save the Post Office. More than 80 national organizations, including the Alliance, are joining the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) to make clear how critical the U.S. Postal Service is to all Americans.

Like millions of other businesses, the U.S. Postal Service has been hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic. Less mail is being sent but daily service must continue. Congress has provided billions in relief to large and small businesses, but the **Trump** Administration and its allies have refused to provide the relief the Postal Service needs. Then-acting Postmaster General **Margaret Brennan** testified this spring that the system would be insolvent by the end of the summer without funding from Congress.

[Hundreds of thousands of petitions gathered in recent weeks will be delivered to Capitol Hill on Tuesday. You can be a part of the Day of Action by signing our petition here.](#)

Seniors have always relied on the Postal Service and the coronavirus pandemic has made it even more essential. Six-day, at home service is critical for seniors to receive important mail, medicines and the goods they need, including receiving groceries safely in their home during this pandemic. The reliance on absentee ballots during the November election to protect voters from exposure to COVID-19 will increase the need for a well-funded and reliable Postal Service.

The USPS provides affordable mail service to all - rich and poor, rural and urban. The public post office was established by the U.S. Constitution and celebrates its 245th anniversary this summer. We can't let partisan politics make our Postal Service another victim of the pandemic.

Fighting Social Isolation and Loneliness During the Pandemic

Last week, the Senate Special Committee on Aging held a virtual [hearing](#) to discuss the need to combat social isolation and prolonged loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March, Americans have been staying home and practicing social distancing to limit the spread of the

coronavirus. While these measures have been necessary, they have intensified the isolation and loneliness that were already an everyday struggle for many older adults.

At the hearing, witnesses included a geriatrician, a public health researcher, and two Area Agency on Aging directors - all of whom are on the front lines of reducing social isolation and loneliness among older adults. Their testimony highlighted the importance of finding solutions to the loneliness that abounds during the nation's health crisis and social distancing.

A Tivity Health [survey](#) found that since the start of the pandemic, the number of adults feeling lonely and isolated has tripled. There are also physical health effects of loneliness and isolation that include an increased risk of premature death and a 50% increased risk of developing dementia.

These increased health risks from isolation and loneliness also increase health care costs. A 2017 [study](#) found that social isolation results in an additional \$6.7 billion in Medicare spending due to increased inpatient care costs and skilled nursing home spending.

"This hearing shined a light on problems that are hitting seniors especially hard," said Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Joseph Peters, Jr.** "Please, call your loved ones, friends and neighbors frequently during the pandemic. Even as parts of daily lives are opening up, seniors are being encouraged to stay at home as much as possible. They especially need to know you are thinking of them during this public health crisis."

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

June 15 was [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#), which provides an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of the tragedy of abuse and neglect of older people.

Each year an estimated [5 million](#) older adults, or one in ten, are abused, neglected, or exploited in the United States. Older Americans lose \$2.6 billion every year due to elder financial abuse and exploitation, often losing money that they have saved over a lifetime.

Physical abuse or neglect can be the result of the use of force to threaten or injure an older person, or the failure to provide for their safety or needs. Look for the [red flags](#) of physical abuse, including broken bones, bruises, poor living conditions, dirt, and poor nutrition.

"Elder abuse is a public health and human rights issue," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, Alliance President. "Working together, we can build the social support system that prevents this abuse and keeps older adults safe as they age."

Everyone has a responsibility to help prevent and address elder abuse. Report suspected mistreatment to your local adult protective services, long-term care ombudsman, or law enforcement agency, who can investigate the situation. You can find out who handles cases of elder abuse in your community by calling the Eldercare Locator hotline at **1-800-677-1116**.