

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2201

April 1, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

In light of the rapidly spreading COVID-19 virus that has transformed life in Florida and threatens to disrupt voting, we request that you implement a universal vote-by-mail policy for the 2020 primary and general elections.

In 2000, the words “hanging chads” entered the political lexicon as the world anxiously awaited the outcome of the presidential election between Texas Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore. It took more than a month to count and recount Florida’s presidential ballots because of voting machine flaws.

In light of the 2000 election fiasco and in an effort to avoid future voting irregularities, Governor Jeb Bush made vote-by-mail universally available in 2002. As a result of that change nearly one out of every three Floridians voted by mail during the 2016 presidential elections.

This year, voters are set to elect a president and congressional, state, and local officials, but the process has already been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing some states to postpone their primaries. This public health crisis threatens to keep people at home out of fear that they may come in contact with someone who has been infected. News reports that some Florida poll workers have tested positive for the novel coronavirus will only exacerbate that fear. Thankfully, we have a robust vote-by-mail infrastructure in place.

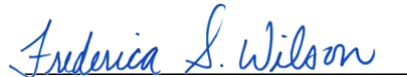
Our state’s vote-by-mail infrastructure could be expanded by reallocating funds designated for polling locations, voting machines, poll workers, and other election administration expenditures. Moreover, the CARES Act includes \$400 million in election security grants that states like Florida may use to increase their ability to conduct elections by mail.

Given the unpredictability of this pandemic, we request that you automatically mail absentee ballots and balloting materials to all registered voters as well as ensure that pre-paid postage and self-sealing return envelopes are provided. It is also imperative that you ensure that absentee ballots and related voting materials are accessible to voters with disabilities.

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This is an important test for our democracy. No one should have to decide between their health and their right to vote. We urge you to act quickly to implement a universal vote-by-mail initiative for the 2020 elections so that Floridians can safely exercise their civic duty. This is an opportunity for Florida to once again lead the nation by example.

Sincerely,



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

Val Demings
Member of Congress

Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Al Lawson
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Donna E. Shalala
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Darren Soto
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
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