



# Secretary of State

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TO: Governor Jay Inslee  
Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig  
Senate Republican Leader Mark Schoesler  
House Speaker Laurie Jenkins  
House Republican Leader J.T. Wilcox

We have been hearing from people throughout our state and across the country who are concerned the upcoming 2020 elections may be cancelled due to COVID-19. As you are aware, cancelling the general election is not an option for Washington. The terms of office for members of Congress and the President are established in the U.S. Constitution to end at noon January 3 and January 20, respectively. The general election date for those elected to Washington's executive, legislative, and judicial offices is defined in the Washington State Constitution as the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

The August primary must be conducted to determine who will appear on the general election ballot. These constitutional provisions cannot be changed without a vote of the people, so election officials must conduct these elections. Rest assured, Washington's election officials including myself have been adapting our plans to conduct these scheduled elections in the midst of COVID-19 social contact restrictions.

We have a duty to hold every election we conduct to the same principles, ensuring elections are accessible, secure, fair, and accurate. As I have previously explained, this pandemic seriously impinges on election officials' ability to maintain these essential standards. Unlike the April election in which 1.1% of our voters will be eligible to participate, the August and November elections will affect each of Washington's 4.5 million voters. It is imperative we act now to prepare.

State and county election officials must mitigate the adverse impacts of COVID-19 and its response to be able to conduct these elections. The impacts include but are not limited to: reductions in the availability of the traditional pool of temporary workers, an increased need for facility space for ballot processing and customer service, reduced availability of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies for workers and in-person voters, and an increased need for replacement workers. These issues will require significant resources to provide in-person registration/voting opportunities, voter information, and ballot processing while simultaneously adhering to the COVID-19 prevention requirements.

Congress recently passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which includes \$400 million in election grants to help states prepare for the 2020 elections. The state of Washington is allocated \$8.3 million in funds through this grant, but it requires the state to appropriate \$1.7 million in match (20%) to access the funds. Our office and county election officials face significant challenges in conducting these elections and need these funds to implement alternative operations.

I formally request you appropriate the \$1.7 million match and authority to disburse the CARES Act funds to my office immediately so we can access these funds and distribute them to county election officials to prepare for the upcoming August and November elections.

Thank you for your support in ensuring Washington's elections are successful in 2020.

Sincerely,



Kim Wyman  
Secretary of State

CC: Members of the Washington State Association of County Auditors