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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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SafeVote plan to be discussed at upcoming Judiciary & Legislation Committee meeting

At the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Judiciary & Legislation Committee on Monday, June 8th committee members will hear from Milwaukee Election Commission Executive Director Neil Albrecht as he presents the drafted SafeVote proposal. The legislation directing Executive Director Albrecht to draft and present the plan was previously introduced by **Alderman Marina Dimitrijevic** and supported by the entire Common Council.

“The circumstances around the April election forced thousands to choose between exercising their right to vote and possibly endangering their health. Steps need to be taken to ensure voters don’t have to face this choice again,” said Alderman Dimitrijevic. “I’m glad to see the Wisconsin Election Commission is following Milwaukee’s efforts to move forward and make voting from home easier for all. We will continue with our SafeVote program to empower and enable all residents in our city to participate safely in our fall elections. We have a solid plan and know our residents’ needs best.”

The demand for absentee voting has increased since the onset of COVID-19. The April 7 spring election saw 96,712 absentee ballots issued with 76,362 (roughly 80% of all votes cast) returned. To date, the Milwaukee Election Commission has received 50,281 absentee ballot requests for the August primary election, and 47,505 requests for the November general election.

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SafeVote/ADD ONE

“In creating the SafeVote plan we had to think creatively about the best ways to reach as many voters as possible and recognize the very real challenges around access to a ballot that many voters experienced in April,” said Mr. Albrecht. “We learned several key lessons from the unprecedented shift from in-person to absentee voting in that election and have incorporated those lessons into SafeVote to make sure we have proper systems in place and are well prepared for the upcoming elections.”

The SafeVote plan calls for two informational mailings sent to City of Milwaukee households, one prior to each election in August and November that would provide residents written and visual information on how to register to vote and request an absentee ballot while encouraging use of the MyVote.WI.Gov website. A majority of absentee ballot requests for the spring election were processed through the MyVote website. Because a voter must already be registered to request and receive an absentee ballot, the SafeVote approach would reach a wider audience by also including information on voter registration. The end goal is to compliment the efforts of the Wisconsin Elections Commission to encourage absentee voting and to have as many people as possible register to vote and request an absentee ballot in advance of the August and November elections.

“We know that many local residents can struggle with finding internet access, navigating a website and securing an image of their photo ID in order to apply for an absentee ballot. The purpose of SafeVote is to encourage safe voting from home while also providing support and the necessary tools to do so,” said Mr. Albrecht. “We believe the dual approach of providing information and resources around registration and absentee voting would maximize participation. Additionally, the MyVote site is incredibly user friendly and a great resource to register and track your absentee ballot online.”

In addition to mailings the SafeVote plan calls for bolstering community resources around registration and absentee voting. Libraries would serve as complementary outlets to assist those who want a paper absentee ballot application, don't have access to internet, need help navigating the MyVote website or need assistance scanning a photo ID.

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SafeVote/ADD TWO

Recognizing some of the mail delivery delays the city experienced in April, the SafeVote plan recommends expanding the number of physical absentee ballot drop-off locations with the goal of one at each library. Additional recommendations include increasing the capacity of the City's Unified Call Center to answer questions prior to the elections, working with colleges and universities to support student voting, revamping absentee voting educational materials, and encouraging safe practices for those who vote in-person.

"I want to thank Neil for his thoughtful and timely effort in drafting this SafeVote proposal, and I look forward to discussing this with my colleagues at the upcoming committee meeting," said Alderwoman Dimitrijevic. "As we work towards an inclusive citywide recovery of COVID-19, we must rebuild our city stronger than it was pre-pandemic and this starts with our democracy. We must protect voters so they can participate in our elections as safely as possible and this plan blends several best practices that empower our city to vote at home."

The Judiciary & Legislation Committee meeting will take place at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, June 8th. The meeting will be televised live on the City Channel (channel 25 on Spectrum Cable and channel 99 on AT&T U-Verse in the City of Milwaukee) and via streaming video on the city website at city.milwaukee.gov/Channel25.

SafeVote Overview

- SafeVote is a plan put forward by Milwaukee elected officials and staff of the Milwaukee Election Commission aimed at providing information and resources for Milwaukee residents to safely vote from home amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the upcoming August and November elections.
- SafeVote calls for two information mailings to all Milwaukee households (one prior to each election in August and November) that include written and visual information on how to register to vote and request an absentee ballot.
- These mailings would be designed to expand upon and complement the efforts of the Wisconsin Elections Commission to send absentee applications to the state's registered voters.
- Residents would be encouraged to utilize the MyVote website to register to vote and then request and track their absentee ballot.
- Libraries would serve as complementary outlets to assist those who want a physical absentee ballot application, don't have access to internet, need help navigating the MyVote website or need assistance scanning a photo ID.
- Additional absentee ballot drop-off sites would be created with the goal of one per library.
- Additional capacity would be added to the City's Unified Call Center to support incoming questions.
- Revamped educational material around absentee voting would be created.
- The City will partner with colleges and universities to support student voting.
- Develop a plan for consolidating polling places to a number that would reduce the demand on election workers, but would not fall below 45 centers citywide, or three voting centers per aldermanic district.