FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum Alerts Voters to Arrival of Absent Voter Ballot Applications

MASON – Today, Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum (D-Onondaga) alerted voters that the Absent Voter Ballot Applications that were mailed by the Michigan Secretary of State seem to be arriving to voters this week.

“Last month, I called on the Governor to instruct the Secretary of State to send out Absent Voter Ballot Applications to every qualified, registered voter,” said Byrum. “This was an initiative that the Secretary of State took on for the May Special election and it paid significant dividends, leading to the highest turnout Michigan has ever seen in such an election.”

Clerk Byrum warned residents that they may receive absent voter ballot applications for former residents.

“President Trump has stoked fears that there may be voter fraud, and many online are quick to cry foul when this mail is received. This is not an indication of fraud,” said Byrum. “When the Secretary of State selected the list of voters, she included those that fall under a challenged status, meaning that they have not voted in years or there is an indication of registering or passing away in another state. Many voters fail to update their voter registration when they move out of the state.”

Anyone attempting to commit voter fraud with these ballots would run into a number of safeguards put in place to stop them.

“If these challenged or verified voters wished to vote, they would need to physically sign the form, return it and then their local clerk would reach out to seek additional verification of their identity,” Byrum continued. “This verification would be rigorous. If a voter receives a ballot that is not meant for them, they should simply return that ballot to sender so the record can be flagged.”

In November of 2018, voters in Michigan passed Proposal 3 which allowed for no-reason absentee voting. Since that time, Clerk Byrum has been a leading advocate of enrolling voters in the Permanent Absent Voter Ballot Application List, ensuring that every qualified registered voter that chooses to receive an absent voter ballot prior to each election may obtain one.

“We have seen thousands of people respond to the mailer I sent out late last year, offering a fast and easy way to apply for the Permanent Absent Voter Ballot Application List,” stated Clerk Byrum. “Given the outbreak of COVID-19, I am doing everything possible to make sure voters do not have to choose between exercising their right to vote and their health and safety.”
Election officials are preparing for the August and November elections and still have significant questions about voters’ willingness to vote in person at their polling locations. While some may choose to do so, concerns over exposure to COVID-19 remain.

“Administering the election safely and ensuring that everyone has a choice in how to exercise their right to vote is my top concern,” said Byrum. “COVID-19 has presented new challenges, but I am confident in the ability of Ingham County election officials to get the job done with safety and security in mind. I have been working continuously with the local clerks in the County to make sure we are ready.”

For more information, call (517) 256-3390.

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