



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

SAINT LOUIS COUNTY
41 SOUTH CENTRAL AVENUE
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI 63105

SAM PAGE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

(314) 615-7016

April 10, 2020

Secretary of State John R. Ashcroft
600 W. Main Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Secretary Ashcroft,

COVID-19 poses a significant threat to the health and wellbeing of the people of St. Louis County. The County has committed all available resources to save lives by preventing COVID-19's spread. One of the primary prevention techniques public health experts recommend is social distancing. To encourage social distancing, the County has restricted non-essential activities and non-essential businesses, prevented restaurants from offering dine-in service, and closed its parks.

At the same time, the State of Missouri must prepare to hold elections for federal, state, and local office. The next St. Louis County election date is June 2, 2020 when rescheduled municipal elections are scheduled to occur. Hopefully the Stay at Home Orders and other restrictions could be lifted by election day, but the spread of COVID-19 is difficult to predict. But it is possible that restrictions will last longer than we would like or may return, if necessary, in the future. Anticipating this, the County's Director of the Department of Public Health incorporated the "exercise of constitutional rights to the extent that by so acting the person does not endanger the public health and safety or the health and safety of any person" as an "essential activity" under her Stay at Home Order. Notwithstanding that language, however, reasonable people may still worry that physically going to the polls to cast a ballot will create risks to their health or to the health of others.

Missouri voters deserve the opportunity to vote without putting their health at risk. And, because legal avenues exist to allow voting while protecting the voter's health, any risks would be entirely unnecessary.

To help protect the right to vote and to prevent the spread of COVID-19, I ask that you issue guidance to local election authorities providing that:

- the provisions allowing absentee voting due to "incapacity or confinement due to illness or physical disability" include those who practice social distancing, self-quarantine, or self-isolation, including but not limited to those who are trying to avoid the spread of an infectious disease;
- a notary is not required for those who cast their ballot by absentee voting due to "incapacity or confinement due to illness or physical disability" as provided above;

- that local officials should provide distance-witnessing services (including, for example, the use of video conferencing technology) for those who are hospitalized after the deadline for requesting an absentee ballot; and
- that local officials may expand the availability of early voting to allow for smaller crowds on election day.

Finally, I ask that you join in requesting that Governor Parson exercise his emergency powers under § 44.100 to allow any registered voter to vote using an absentee ballot this year.

Please kindly consider these requests so that we can, working together, overcome the monumental challenges COVID-19 poses to St. Louis County and to the State of Missouri.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Page". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sam Page