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Merced County, CA Elections Releases Update on Election Planning under COVID-19

MERCED, CA – August 11, 2020 – In consideration of the challenges posed by COVID-19, the Registrar of Voters has provided an update on changes and procedures that will be implemented for the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election. These changes will be put in place as a result of COVID-19 so that all voting and all election processes can be conducted safely and securely.

Per Executive Order and recently passed legislation, **California law requires that every active registered voter be mailed a ballot for the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election.** The mailing of a ballot will allow for voters to vote safely and securely from home. Ballots will be mailed out in early October.

Voters should take the time now to verify their voter registration at voterstatus.sos.ca.gov or mercedelections.org. Voters are encouraged to be sure that their current residential address or mailing address is on file. Voters can update their voter registration, and eligible citizens can register to vote, at registertovote.ca.gov

It is a requirement that the signature on every returned voted ballot envelope be compared to the signature on the voter's registration record. If a voter thinks that their signature has changed over time, they should contact the Merced County Elections Office at 209-385-7541 or re-register online at registertovote.ca.gov. The DMV signature may be utilized with online voter registration.

Voters will be urged to vote the ballot mailed to them and return it through one of the secure ballot drop boxes that will be located throughout the county. Drop boxes will be open beginning October 5, 2020 and up to 8:00 pm on Election Day. A list of all drop box locations will be mailed with the County Voter Information Guide. Voters may choose to return their ballot, postage paid, via the postal service. Election officials are working closely with United States Postal Service officials to increase the awareness regarding vote by mail ballots. The Postal Service advises that voters should deposit their ballots in the mail no later than October 27, 2020 to ensure that the envelope timely reaches the elections office.

Voters can track their ballot and receive automatic email, text or voice call notifications about their ballot. To request this service, sign up at wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov. For the November election, voters may request and receive a Remote Accessible Vote by Mail ballot.

To request this service, voters should contact our office at 209-385-7541. Official ballots will be printed in English and Spanish. Voters may also request a translated ballot in Hmong, Punjabi, Chinese, or Mien by calling 209-385-7541.

In addition to mailing a ballot as required to every active registered voter, Merced County Elections will provide Voting Assistance Centers. Voting Assistance Centers will provide voters the opportunity to drop off their voted ballots, replace a lost or damaged ballot, access services including language assistance or accessible ballot marking devices and register to vote and vote. Merced County will provide approximately 12 Voting Assistance Center locations for these in-person voting opportunities. The Voting Assistance Centers will be open on Saturday, October 31, 2020, Sunday, November 1, 2020, Monday, November 2, 2020 and Election Day, Tuesday, November 3, 2020. Those who go to a Voting Assistance Center will be asked to wear a mask and may have to wait in line. A list of all Voting Assistance Centers and Drop Boxes will be printed in the County Voter Information Guide to be mailed in early October and will be available on the County website.

To support Election activities and processes, part time jobs are available with Merced Elections! Voting Assistance Center workers are needed for the four day in-person voting period and office and warehouse assistance is needed throughout all processes related to the Election. Interested registered voters should call 209-385-7541 or go to mercedelections.org to apply on-line. Poll workers are also needed for the four days that the in-person sites will be open.

Responses and plans will continue to evolve as changes in the pandemic or public health requires. Understanding that the situation can change rapidly, the Registrar of Voters and Merced County Elections are taking proactive approaches to planning and preparations and is sharing information with the public and other jurisdictions to aid in their planning.

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