FAQ: Voting in the Age of COVID19

*Introduction*
Just as the COVID19 crisis has impacted virtually all aspects of our lives, so too has it impacted how our elections will function this fall. How individuals vote, as well as the amount of time they have to vote, and even where they vote, may look different. Here, we aim to walk voters through our fall elections, and how they can ensure to have their voices heard.

*Vote by Mail*

**How do I request a ballot?**
- Around July 15, the Secretary of the Commonwealth will mail all of the state’s registered voters an application to vote by mail for the September 1 State Primary.
- The applications, as well as the ballots that voters may eventually receive, will include pre-paid return envelopes addressed to their local election office.
- Around September 15, the Secretary will mail out applications for the November 3 General Election, where the same process will apply.

**Are there any other ways that I can request a ballot?**
- Ballots may be requested via mail, online, or in-person. Applications must be requested at least one week before each election via mail or online. However, voters have until noon the day before the election to pick up an absentee ballot in-person.
- To request a ballot online, voters may contact their local election office via email, simply informing them that they would like to vote by mail.
- Signatures used to request ballots online must be very similar to handwritten signatures.
- They may also request a ballot through the Secretary of State’s online portal, though that may not be active until October 1. That will not require a signature.

*What about deadlines?*
- Voters have until one week before each election to request a mailed ballot
- For the September primary, voters must deliver their ballots by election day.
- For the November general, voters must postmark their ballots by election day.
• Voters may also deposit their ballots in secure drop boxes located outside of their local election office, or deliver them in-person.

In-Person Voting

Will there be early voting?
• The state has extended the early voting period for the general election, allowing individuals to vote early from October 17-30.
• They have also, for the first time, introduced early voting in the state primary, which will run from August 22-28.
• This window will include weekend voting, though hours per location vary.

Will there be Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?
• When people turn out to vote, they should take the same precautionary measures that they currently take, such as wearing a mask and practicing social distancing.
• Voters may take additional steps and bring their own pens to the polls.
• Poll workers will be equipped with PPE and sanitizing supplies.

Where do I vote?
• Those who choose to vote in-person should verify their polling place with their local election official. Up to 20 days before each election, cities and towns may relocate polling locations out of public health concerns.
• Cities and towns are to notify voters when their polling place has changed, but do not assume that your polling place is traditionally where you vote if you do not hear from your city or town on changes.

Voter Registration

Has the voter registration process changed at all?
• The state has lowered the voter registration deadline from 20 days before each election to 10.
• If you have a Massachusetts state ID, you may register to vote online. If you do not, you must submit a Mail-In Voter Registration Form to your local election official.
• To receive a vote by mail application for the July 15 mailing date, you must register to vote or update your registration by July 1.
• If you register or update your registration after this deadline, then you will receive an application in the following weeks.