

Statement Before The
SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

1:00 pm

State Capitol

in consideration of
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE UPCOMING 2020 ELECTIONS.

Chair DELA CRUZ and Members of the Senate Special Committee

Common Cause Hawaii appreciates this committee reviewing the impact of COVID-19 on the upcoming 2020 elections.

The State Office of Elections and County Clerks by [Proclamation dated May 15, 2020](#) stated that Hawaii's first all vote-by-mail elections – during a public health crisis no less – will only have eight Voter Service Centers statewide to conduct in-person voting, same day register voters, collect voted ballots, and more, such as respond to the confusion, mistakes, mishaps, and countless questions that vote-by-mail's launch will inevitably bring. These eight Voter Service Centers (2 on Oahu, 2 on the Big Island, 1 on Maui Island, 1 on Molokai, 1 on Lanai, and 1 on Kauai) will only be open 10 days prior to elections from 8 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Saturday and on election days from 7 am to 7 pm.

Eight Voter Service Centers statewide will not be sufficient. There is a significant risk that lines may form with only eight Voter Service Centers statewide, jeopardizing public health and elections' staff safety, especially as medical experts have opined that a second wave of the coronavirus is expected to impact the country in the fall / winter months, when Hawaii is voting.

Additionally, the Proclamation sets forth Places of Deposit to collect voted ballots for people who may not trust the postal service or who may want to turn in ballots personally, as there may not be enough time to mail ballots, given that they must be received by 7 pm on election days. Many of these Places of Deposit are not open 24 hours and are located on government facilities (similar to Voter Service Centers) and public parks.

The State Office of Elections received nearly [\\$3.3 million for election security](#) from the CARES Act to be spent by December 31, 2020 “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus for the 2020 Federal election cycle.” With this funding more than the stated number of Voter Service Centers and Places of Deposit located on government property should have been realized. State Office of Elections even said in [its request for the monies](#) that the funds could be spent on establishing additional Voter Service Centers and Places of Deposit.

Common Cause of Hawaii, therefore, respectfully asks, that the Senate Special Committee inquire of the State Office of Elections and County Clerks:

- 1) Why additional Voter Service Centers and Places of Deposit were not established on Oahu, Hawaii County, and Maui Island, given the obvious need?
- 2) What are the federal CARES Act election security funds being spent on, if not Voter Service Centers and Places of Deposit?
- 3) How they have updated their elections plans to protect voters and elections staff while voting during a pandemic?

Common Cause of Hawaii again thanks the Senate Special Committee for reviewing this issue of the 2020 elections during the time of COVID. If you have further questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

