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Section: Opinion

SC residents with disabilities, staying safe at home, have a right to safe voting

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On a typical day at Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities, we talk to people who have multiple disabilities. Still more have underlying medical conditions that are caused by or contribute to their disabilities.

Many people with such conditions have been isolated in their homes and will remain so until the pandemic is over, out of concern for their health. They now have to decide how they will vote during a pandemic.

The majority of our poll workers are seniors and have legitimate misgivings about working on Election Day. The buildings in which we vote are not required to open their doors to voters. We will inevitably see closures of polling places, meaning more crowding at precincts that remain open.

Governor McMaster said in April that he sees no reason to further delay elections or make any changes to the current system.

Modest changes such as loosening restrictions on who can vote absentee and eliminating the witness requirement will allow more people to vote from the safety of their homes.

The state's inaction in making the necessary changes to our election processes during this state of emergency endangers the health of all South Carolinians, especially those with disabilities.

We must support changes in our election procedures that will make social distancing more feasible and allow all South Carolinians the opportunity to vote from their homes. It is the best way to keep everyone, especially people with disabilities, safe at the polls.

Erin Haire

Columbia

**Why General Assembly must make voting easier in SC**

Immediate steps need to be authorized by the General Assembly when it meets next week to safeguard the upcoming elections. "Doing nothing" is unacceptable to the League of Women Voters of South Carolina and to many concerned citizens throughout our state.

Until COVID-19 is conquered, until a proven vaccine or effective treatment is readily available, the state's citizens must not be required to gather together in crowded polling places on election days, risking their personal health and potentially spreading contagion throughout their communities. Equally important, our poll workers and other election personnel must be able to carry out their work without danger of personal harm.

The General Assembly will convene next week , and we urgently call on our leaders to take that opportunity to cooperate with the requests made by our state and county election officials, to provide expanded opportunities for both in-person and mail-in absentee voting, to set up rigorous protections for poll workers, and to allow more than 24 hours for counting the absentee ballots.

SC citizens should not be asked to risk their health or that of others in the exercise of our democracy's most cherished right: the right to vote.

Christe McCoy-Lawrence

Holly Hill

The writer is co-president of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina.

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