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[CC standing by]

>> Hello and welcome to everyone. If you can bear with us for just a few minutes, we were having some technical difficulties which will be taken care of very shortly. So welcome and just hang in there and we will be with you in a few minutes. Thank you.

>> Hello everyone. Thank you for your patience today. Hopefully now have all our technical difficulties taken care of. And welcome to our webinar vote smart in Illinois in 2020. My name is Sharon Johnson and I'm the proud president of the national Council of Jewish women's South cook section serving Illinois southern suburbs. National Council of Jewish Women is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. South Cook Section with 500+ members will be celebrating our 100th birthday in 2021. Today's conversation will be recorded, posted online, and shared widely for those who cannot attend in person. Vote smart Illinois 2020 is being presented in partnership with the South suburban Chicago chapter of the links Incorporated.

>> Good evening. I'm Mallory Sutton, the president of the South suburban Chicago Illinois chapter of The Links, Incorporated. On November 9, 1946, friends Margaret Roselle Hawkins and Sarah Strickland Scott, founded the women's service organization The Links, Incorporated. There are over 200 chapters developed across this nation. Nine of those chapters support communities in the Chicagoland area, including the South Suburban Chicago Chapter with a focus in the south suburban community. Founded June 6th 1976. The South suburban Chicago chapter is comprised of 52 dedicated leaders who joined the organization for the purpose of service and friendship for over 40 years. The chapter is honored to be the home chapter of the 14th national

president Dr. Gwendolyn B Lee. The chapter serves and thrives under five program facets. Services to youth, national trends and services, health and human services , international trends and services and the arts. Through the facets, the chapter plans and develops transfer national programs that provide a measurable impact on the community. Our chapter theme, serving the needs by sustaining excellence, supports the national theme, transforming communities, fulfilling our purpose. Here are some ground rules for tonight's webinar. Today's program is one hour in length. You will notice everyone's mics are muted and cameras are turned off. This is intentional, to keep the focus on our speakers today. Please write in the chat if you are experiencing ongoing technical issues, but please note our limited capacity to address issues while the webinar is running. A gentle reminder that we are recording the webinar and it will be uploaded to the following websites. ncjwsouthcook.org. and ssclinks.org. we are featuring live captioning during the webinar you can access the future by clicking caption at the bottom of your screen. Please read any questions you have in the chat, and they will be addressed during the Q&A. At the end of the webinar time permitting. Now it is my pleasure to introduce our first speaker Tyler St. Clair. Tyler joined Common Cause Illinois in every 2020 stepping into the role of outreach manager, his primary responsibilities include community outreach and engagement, volunteer recruitment, and the creation of programming to pursue campaign priorities. Prior to joining Common Cause Illinois, Tyler worked on multiple campaigns advocating for the environment and public health. Taking him from Indiana to Iowa and finally to Maine, where he coordinated a statewide campaign to protect the air we breathe. Tyler received his bachelors degree from the University of Evansville and most recently received a master of public administration degree from Auburn University, with a focus in election administration. He has studied and worked on issues pertaining to the administration of elections in the United States as well as a broad, serving as an international observer for the 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria.

>> Perfect thank you very much, Mallory. Let me share my screen here real quick and we will get started. All right everybody good evening. Again, my name is Tyler St. Clair and I'm the outreach manager here at Common Cause Illinois. For those that aren't familiar with our organization Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization with the mission of holding power accountable. We work on many issues focused on good governance including voting rights and access, government ethics, money in politics, redistricting and more. We are a national organization with offices in about 30 states and here in Illinois have about 40,000 members. I want to thank a moment to thank Barbara and Ellen to invite me as a speaker tonight and take all of you for joining us discuss important information. I've been doing these presentations for a couple months now but this is my first presentation alongside a county clerk so I'm thickly excited to hear Lawrence presentation tonight. We've got a lot of information to cover here so let's jump right in. The reason we are here right, casting a ballot by mail. Casting a ballot by mail is not a new phenomenon in the US. Casting a ballot by absentee actually began during the Civil War as soldiers were allowed to vote from the battlefield units and have

the ballots sent home to be counted. Again during world wars one and two this became a major issue. Today we have laws --- the military and overseas voter empowerment act to address these issues. What started as a system for military overseas citizens was later applied to nonmilitary citizens but it was not until the 1980s when California allowed citizens to request absentee ballots early.

So the process varies from state to state but there are some universal issues that election officials have to consider. They have to think about printing costs, where they get the paper from. More often than not these tend to be contracts with vendors. The cost of postage both to voters and from voters, including is the postage already prepaid? They have to think about the costs of supporting documents in election mail such as language requirement documents, a notice of the postage necessary to ship the ballot back and more and then the ballots have to be postmarked by a specific date and received by the election authority by a specific time and finally signatures must be verified. This ranges from automated electronic systems like they use an organ that scans each signature to election judges, verifying each signature by hand if an election worker thinks that there's a problem with the ballot [indiscernible] process begins allows notifying the motor and allowing them time to come in, cure the ballot and have it validated.

So, who uses vote by mail? one of the things talking about voting by mail and how we prepare for November mostly is how Illinois stacks up to the rest of the country. But this is a map pulled up by the vote at home Institute. You might have heard of them eating some of the articles about voting at home or vote by mail it is pared down from the level of detail from what they use, but for the purposes of this presentation it displays the points that I would like to make.

I would also note quickly that a lot of the states depicted here [as excused] absentee have a lot of rapped requirements for the collections or have provided a public health excuse so obviously with primary elections happening and election officials in November a lot of things have been changing but this is sort of the standard look at states across the country. So they exist on the spectrum when it comes to mail ballot implementation, but for the purposes of this presentation we are going to focus on for groups, Which is universal vote by mail, no excuse absentee with a permanent mail ballot option, no excuse absentee and excuse absentee. I will note here quickly that it is important to realize that states that transition to universal vote by mail did it over time with deliberate budgeting and policy processes designed to implement vote by mail. Oregon actually introduced their first piece of legislation around this in the 1980s. And it was not passed until 1998. Colorado also evolved into the model over the course of a decade or so, which was really an exercise in getting voters and policymakers to become comfortable with the practice. So universal vote by mail , the states that are in dark blue Washington, Oregon, Utah Colorado and Hawaii, universal vote by mail states where every registered voter is automatically mailed a ballot for each election, California is going to be the next day to do this transitioning by 2022 and 2024. Oregon again was

the first state to adopt a vote by mail back in 1998. But prior to this localities and counties before primary elections could opt to use vote by mail and obviously it has increased in popularity quite a bit since then. While a large portion of voters in the states to return their votes by mail including vote centers and 24 hour ballot drop boxes it is again important to note that according to the survey performance of American elections, in Oregon for example 59% of voters still return to their ballot to a physical location. So again stressing the importance of increased vote by mail capacity while maintaining in person voter options. The second group I want to talk about is no excuse absentee states. This is the most common system in the US and it is where Illinois falls in the mix.

So with no excuse absentee states there are some differences where some states include permanent ballot application or ballot lists where a voter can sign up to automatically receive their ballot application or their ballot for each election. Illinois has something similar but it's only for voters with disabilities and it is a five-year list not a permanent list and other areas localities can determine for themselves if they would like to host an election entirely by mail. North Dakota is an example of this where counties can elect to use vote by mail assistance if they choose. One of the biggest differences between universal vote by mail and no excuse states is as I'm sure you've heard in discourse around voting by mail and expanding capacity to mail ballots out to voters, one of the biggest differences between these two kinds of states is investment in infrastructure, and again the policy process and budgeting process for adopting universal vote by mail systems was very deliberate and it happened over a period of time.

So while I am glad we are expanding the capacity of vote by mail in Illinois we realize that it would be incredibly difficult if not impossible to move to universal vote by mail by November. The last group that I will talk about here quickly is excuse absentee. This is considered to be the most restrictive, in terms of mail voting. The states are represented by the very very light green/tan color and it is the second most used vote by mail system in the US. Again, I would highlight here that most if not all of these states fall, that fall under this category have adopted or at least a temporary period of time policies that increase access to vote by mail, Kentucky being the most recent example which had early voting and no excuse absentee vote by mail ballots for the first time in state history.

So there's a lot of progress being made sort of pushed on by coded 19 and the impact it has had on communities and finally in the larger discussion of should states transition to vote by mail there are a few states that could realistically do it based on the systems they have in place now over the short term and the voters who participate in them so looking at this map in Arizona and Montana both use systems like this. Nevada would be another candidate in California is making that transition. Sometime between 2022 and 2024 so let's talk about this information around voting by mail. This is one of my favorite political cartoons from Jon [Derrico] out of Missouri. You might remember

the court case out of North Carolina's court ninth district out of--- including ones that if we allow people to vote by mail they will be sitting in their living rooms filling out hundreds of ballots and sending them in, or children will go door-to-door and steal ballots out of their mailbox. The fact of the matter there is nothing to base these claims on voter fraud in general is already very rare in the US and vote by mail states to have some of the most secure elections in the country and report an exceedingly no number of fraud cases a few reasons for this including identity verification whenever you apply for a mail ballot you have to provide a number of pieces of sensitive personal information to obtain your ballot and envelope, signature verification and voter specific barcodes on each ballot, ballot dropping, secure ballot drop boxes and [indiscernible] so again the short answer, voter fraud and vote by mail systems is infinitesimally small. As an example Oregon who has conducted their elections by mail since 2000 has sent out over 100 million ballots and only adopted about a dozen cases of perusing fraud, which is less than .000001% of all votes cast.

A different analysis found that in all states between 2020 12, only 491 cases have absentee ballot fraud occurred again infinitesimally small. The next and the last claims I will talk about, is the claim that vote by mail or increased vote by mail will make it so that Republicans will never win another election. So there's no basis to this claim, as both Democratic and Republican election officials support these systems across the country.

For example Ken Wyman, who is the Secretary of State for Washington state, and Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland who are both vocal supporters of vote by mail and you tell Mr. the red state has been using vote by mail for a while. In a recent study called initial partisan effects of vote by mail evidence from county level rollouts, researchers from Florida found that mail ballots did not seem to have an effect on the parties either parties vote share and that modest turnoutcreases are similar to previous findings which tends to be 3 to 4 percentage points. So again, there's a lot of this information, this information floating out around there but I would reiterate the fact that vote by mail and increased vote by mail capacity has been shown to be incredibly secure, and not benefit one party over the other but rather modestly increase voter turnout, which is always a good thing.

So the importance of expanded mail voting for Illinois, if you read the Chicago Sun-Times you might or member this picture around primary season. So we all remember March 17, right? that Tuesday Arizona Florida Illinois and Ohio were all scheduled to host primary elections. Ohio ended up postponing but what we saw here in Illinois is a prime example of why expanding vote by mail is so important and I think spurred us to continue to grapple with Covid 19 and the challenge of prevents for the electoral system. Prior to March 17 election authorities in Illinois particular Chicago and County prepared for a number of issues as they prepare to host voting including relocating a high number of polling locations for example ones that were located in buildings with high concentrations of at-risk populations but were 170 sites were eventually relocated and even then [indiscernible] housing facilities for low income seniors were used as

polling locations. Additionally many sites were close on an emergency basis as shortages of election judges became common. I also want to note here that March ended up being a perfect storm for the state of Illinois as well as Florida and Arizona. Election authorities were dealing with impossible circumstances in March and some of it none of us could truly have prepared for, right? And through a Herculean effort we are still able to conduct an election here in the state. But we hope that with the new legislation Senate Bill 1863 and through collaboration with community partners we can work together to make the election in November as safe and accessible as possible. Studies show again that vote by mail tends to increase voter turnout by providing additional opportunities for voter [ballots] and overtime has decreased costs.

I recently developed a saying to myself accessible elections are successful election so we are excited for the work ahead of us to make sure November is as accessible as possible. So SB 1863, the Gov. signed into law I believe it was last week. A few of the changes that are coming to the state of Illinois from November, election day is now a state holiday for schools and state workers. All eligible voters who have voted in 2018 through 2020, or who newly registered to vote and update registration information will be sent a vote by mail application. Creation of a central online vote by mail portal by the Illinois State Board of elections promotes voting by mail through a comprehensive public education campaign, again which is where a lot of the advocacy organization see our role is public education expanded early voting hours, 15 days out and longer mandated office hours--- must follow Illinois to permit a public health guidelines for recruitment of younger judges which is really important, right? again one of the issues we saw in March was election judges and poll workers in general tend to be older in age and therefore tend to be more susceptible to risks posed by coronavirus, so recruiting younger election judges including advertising in high schools and colleges and universities is really important as we go from the summer months into the fall and into November. Finally I will flag here promotion of curbside voting and collection sites also known as drop boxes. Again, additional ways that people can cast the ballot and feel safely --- accessible elections are successful elections. That being said it does not pertain to everything we are concerned about in particular a language access provisions are not expressly stated and there are not specific provisions that shrink or limit the shrinking of election day footprints. So the amount of physical polling locations you have or voting in election day, but again we're working with partners and election officials to make sure these issues are addressed and that everyone has the opportunity to cast their ballots safely. Finally I would also note that all of the reforms proposed in the amendment, sunset, they end as of January 1, 2021. But personally I think this leaves the door open for us to continue to advocate for electoral reforms. So the actual important slide of my presentation, how does this affect you? so there are a couple different buckets of people fall into, right, first if you voted into an auction from 2018 to 2020 you will automatically have a valid application mailed to you. These go out on August 1. That being said it's also fine if you go ahead and submit or apply for your mail ballot I've heard from a couple different election authorities they want people to go

ahead and they can process all those applications. If you fall into the category of someone who has not voted between 2018 and 2020 you will have to submit a valid application. There are a few options here. You can either go straight to the election authority website, so the county clerk or Board of elections and submit the application, or you can use the portal that the Illinois State Board of elections has crated which will guide you to your election [indiscernible finally if you are not]. Register to but right now your registration can serve as your application for ballot. It is my understanding that people who go to register update the registration will have the option to check a box declaring that they want to apply for the ballot. Additionally the Secretary of State's office will follow up with those who have received mail ballot applications, but have not yet submitted them and that happens twice. Once in September and once in October.

A few different universes of voters, but regardless of what universe you fall into once you have submitted the ballot application ballots will begin to be mailed out about 40 days before election day. So late September early October. I believe the first day is the 24th. So what about return methods? the first obviously mailing your ballot back to the election authority... Depending on what your County Clerk and board of election decides to do to prepare for the November election there might also be the opportunity to return your ballot via secure dropbox and finally in person options are going to be available. This is really important as there are just parts of the population that feel more comfortable voting in person and do not feel comfortable going through the ballot request process. Again, early voting hours have been extended for the general election and election day voting will of course still be happening. Illinois Department of Public health guidelines will be mandated at each polling location but locations and times should be available on your County Clerk or Board of elections website closer to election day. And that is all that I have for this evening. Again, thank you to Barbara, Ellen and everyone at the Council for having me speak tonight. And I will turn it over to our next speaker.

>> Thank you Tyler. That was a great presentation and great information. Our next speaker is Lauren Staley Ferry the clerk of Will County. Lauren has a long history of service to our community as both an elected official and as a community leader. Lauren is serving as her first term as well County Clerk having been elected to her office in November 2018. As County Clerk Lauren has the honor of supervising the election process and will County she also is responsible for maintaining vital records for Will County citizens including birth certificates death certificates and marriage certificates. In addition, she has the happy duty of issuing licenses to couples who are planning to get married. She also serves as the clerk for the Will County board. Prior to her election is County Clerk, Lauren served as a Will County board member and was instrumental in planning major building projects, including the construction of a new public safety complex for the Will County Sheriff's Department and a new Will County Courthouse. In the community she has been involved with many local service organizations, and she continues to serve as executive board members for big Brothers/ big sisters of Will and Grundy counties, the Spanish Trinity Center and the Heritage corridor convention and

visitors Bureau. Lauren was born and raised in Joliet, where she attended St. Mary Nativity grade school and Joliet Catholic Academy. She is the proud mother of her young son Matthew. Lauren. There she is. yay. No problem I will get off.

>> Okay well thank you so much for having me Ellen and Barbara on the Council and everybody that's attending tonight. I don't have flights to share with you, but I have a lot of really great information. Some of it Tyler did cover, so that presentation was great, Tyler. It was really great to hear everything you had to say. But again, thank you for having me. I'm excited to talk about vote by mail and a lot of the, I guess we can say exciting changes. I'm trying to always stay positive about everything that we have going on. So you hurt a little bit about my background. I'm in my first term as County Clerk. Needless to say it has been quite the 18 month already ushering in sweeping changes with vote by mail and dealing with everything that Covid 19 has brought us, has kept us very busy within the office. So it's been important access for the residents of Will County is something that has been really important to me.

So we were excited to be able to expand the number of early voting sites across Will County. We launched a student ambassador program to empower young people to get them involved and get them looking toward being election judges and things like that so we have been able to do some pretty good things in the first 18 months that I've been in office. I know that everybody wants to hear about vote by mail and that is the hot topic right now so I will go ahead and just jump right into that information but again this will be more specific to Will County, since that is where I am at, but absolutely willing to answer any questions you have and find any answers that I can for anybody. I'm sure everybody knows, Tyler covered a lot, we may have some overlapping information but everybody I'm sure knows there are three ways to cast a ballot in Illinois. I'm going to cover all three. And I will discuss the impacts Covid 19 has had on each as well. We have election day voting at the polling places, early voting at one of the 25 sites across Will County and obviously vote by mail which has gained most of the attention lately. I think people we have seen have varying levels of comfort with each way to cast a ballot. But all are secure with checks and balances to avoid any kind of mischief or anything like that that people have those thoughts about. I think previously we have seen that the most common and typical way that people vote are to actually go to the polling place. People like the traditional feel to walk in and be able to cast their vote there. In Will County we have roughly 465,000 registered voters. We have 304 precincts. We have 245 polling places. We train 1535 election judges. For this general election we are hoping to have 1700 to 2000. Just because we saw so many cancellations in the primary. And we have field technicians as well. We have about 80 field technicians. Obviously the pandemic and Covid 19 created many challenges for the primary and we are preparing for the same for November. We had, in Will County we had seven polling places plot at the last minute. Mostly they were all retirement or nursing homes. And so actually seven out of our 245 was really not that bad. And we obviously had hundreds of election judges that canceled due to health concerns. The morning of the election you know, we were on the radio and we were recruiting folks to come in that morning and

get a quick five minute or 10 minute training class and had to a polling place because that is all we could do to get people out there and help assist voters. Obviously we had a lot of phone calls that day, raised voter concerns just about going to the polls that day. The future is uncertain, but we are working right now to confirm all of our polling places for November and we have been successful. So we are hoping to have a full roster of polling places in the general election. We may move a few due to the same concerns but right now everything is looking really good. We are going to do all we can obviously to protect the health of the public and our election judges. We are developing polling place health protocol, obviously to encourage social distancing while waiting in line and making sure that everybody is following the CDC health practices as well. In Will County we are going to be sending our election judges with protective face coverings, gloves we are exploring the sneeze shields at the actual tables. Or individual face shields as well. We are not sure which method we will choose but we will have something. We are going to have large hand sanitizing stations at every polling place. And then we will have individual bottles of hand sanitizers for every judge at every table along with large canisters of disinfectant wipes. So it has been much different than our preparation previously. We spent the last few months since March procuring all of these supplies and materials so we can make sure that our election judges and the public is safe if people want to go to the polling place on election day.

Early voting has been... A big, we have seen a big increase in early voting in Will County we did add four early voting locations as I mentioned before in certain areas that I felt may have been in sort of underserved areas in the county. And again I think access is just really important for everybody to make sure that they are able to exercise their most important rights. So it was important to make sure that we have several sites available. So we have 25 early voting locations.

We are working with them right now to make sure that they are expanding their hours at all of the sites, evenings and weekends, they will be available and open. And in the primary we did expand further hours at the last minute just to make sure that people were able to get in there and vote if they needed to. Early voting starts to expire to the election, so that will be October 19 this year. At the county clerk's office, at my office we actually start 40 days prior to the election so people can come in cast a ballot at the county clerk's office. That will start September 24th. We've seen a lot of growth in early voting. In 2016 we saw in the primary 12,000, around 13,000 people in the general election 60,000 people that went to an early voting location. In 2018 in the primary in general it was a little bit less than that actually. 10,883 people voted early in the primary and in the primary in 2020 we had 25,308 people vote at an early voting location. So we actually saw an increase in 2020 and the primary. We think it was probably driven partially by the pandemic. We are, we did the math. We are projecting around 115,000 early voters this year for the November election. So we don't know if that is a trend yet. Will it continue? will the increase in vote by mail drive those numbers down as well that people actually go to the early voting locations? so we don't have a crystal ball. We are certainly waiting to see how that turns out in November. So I know the hot topic is vote

by mail, so I will go ahead and quickly run through some things. Again Tyler did a great job covering a lot of it, but like Tyler said vote by mail has been around for years. We are seeing a big increase in its popularity though. He mentioned Colorado Hawaii Oregon Utah Washington are the states that have full vote by mail elections. And in Will County and has been expanding as well. We have a range from 6381 vote by mail ballots to our largest the high watermark that we have seen, was 3300 --- and the 2018 midterms was just behind that 28,000 vote by mail ballots. I think we have seen the voter benefits for vote by mail, it is convenient, you can do it right from your home, sit right at your kitchen counter and do it. As Tyler mentioned too, vote by a meal states report higher turnout. And they also see a cost savings over election day voting. We have had some phone calls and been on some conference calls with folks from other states that have gone that route, so just kind of exploring and getting information more about that. We obviously also hear some concerns about voters. The biggest concern that we hear is, is it secure? People do not trust the United States Postal Service.

We do hear that a lot. Historically vote by mail has been ask and you shall receive. Applications for ballots start 90 days before the election. Ballots begin being mailed 40 days prior to the election. In Will County the ballots get returned and they are run through tabulator's at what we call Central County and that happens before election day but there are never any election results posted until that night on the website. Any ballots we receive vote by mail after election day they must be postmarked by election day and they are tabulated at our provisional count which is two weeks after election day. Obviously you know we want to talk about security. It is something that's on everybody's minds when we talk about vote by mail. The ballots are verified by the same standard that supplied on election day. Voter signatures, the sealed and signed ballots, envelopes are inspected by the election authority that is pursuant to the statute.

Our ballots are stored in a security coded vault. They go in there every night and when they come in and we put them in the security coded vault they are opened processed and tabulated pursuant to the statute and then the first time in this primary, this past primary we did process under the scrutiny of poll watchers. So we had poll watchers in the office every single day to watch us process those vote by mail ballots, which was interesting. But it was great. We opened up the office and we had poll watchers coming in they were able to see the process and I think that helped make them feel more comfortable. We have other security checks and balances. Folks can track their applications and ballots online. When we receive your application, when the ballot was sent out, and when the ballot was received back. We have that option on our website, which is very nice for people. They can just go on and check to see where their ballot is at. Our electronic poll books. We use electronic pollbooks on election day. They prevent vote by mail and polling place voting, the poll books will tell us whether vote by mail ballot was sent but not returned. Sent, returned and already processed, the bottom line with that is only one ballot can count per voter. Let's see. So the new vote by mail legislation, Senate Bill 1863, we were very involved in a lot of those conversations, close to the legislators that were working on it. I worked with the colored County clerks

that have you know the same population as we do. We sent letters to the governor and too many of our legislators that we work with just to sort of make sure that they were hearing us as election officials and what it would mean, you know depending on what they decided to mandate. And it worked out great to have that kind of seat at the table. You know, obviously the pandemic raised major concerns about in person voting so the Gen. assembly wanted to make sure that vote by mail was more accessible. I agree that's what they did. It is still basically ask and you shall receive, but the legislation we feel strongly encourages everyone to ask. Tyler mentioned the sunset. The law only applies to the 2020 presidential election. So some highlights. Everybody that voted in the last three elections will be mailed an application by August 1. I think Tyler mentioned this as well. In Will County we decided that we have a mandated mass mailing that we have to send every two years to every registered voter. So this year in July 2020 we would be sending out everybody's voter registration cards. For me it made sense to mail a vote by mail application to every registered voter along with their new voter registration card. We feel it just made sense. It saves, we are actually going to save around \$130,000 on postage. So big savings for taxpayers, and it just gives people the option, every registered voter will receive that application you know, if they would like to use it they can. We also have the option for people to go on the website and do it that way as well. But we were excited to kind of make that connection and be able to send every registered voter that application. Hopefully that makes it a little bit easier. It outlines procedures for inspecting the signatures and processing the ballots. So when we go ahead and process the ballots there's no longer, it is no longer just simply by the election authority, we will have to have election judges from both parties and there helping to process the vote by mail ballots when they come in. It does expand early voting hours in larger cities, permanent polling places 8:30 to 7 on weekdays and 9-5 on weekends. So quickly let's talk about vote by mail ballots. The applications will get sent out. You can complete and return the application through the mail. You can scan and email it back. We have the email address is [vote by mail@willcountyillinois.com](mailto:votebymail@willcountyillinois.com). You can complete the application right online. The website is the [will County clerk.com](http://willcountyclerk.com) so you can go right on there. And click the affidavit and you will be put in the queue to receive an application. And you can opt in now when you register to vote in Will County or with the state that just happen this past weekend so when you are in a registered voter you can opt in and that's actually to receive your actual ballot which is a really nice option now for newly registered voters. We will begin mailing ballots on September 24th. Completed applications... Early September 24th the ballots will be sent out by October 5th. So you can once again track your ballot and your application all online and the [will County clerk.com](http://willcountyclerk.com) when the application was received, when the ballot was sent, when the ballot was received back as well. All that information will be on there. Follow the instructions closely on the vote by mail packet. There's some, maybe two different envelopes in there. I was hoping to have a packet with me but I left the office and forgot it there. But it is, all of the instructions are in the vote by mail packet. And it must be postmarked by election day to count. And then again as far as security goes, the ballots are verified by the same standard applied on election day, the signature process. So the

sealed and signed ballot envelopes are inspected by election judges. Signature any signature that is questioned now with this new legislation there will be a ruling made by a team of three election judges. That is specific in the legislation. We expect poll watchers to be present again just because of the increased amount of vote by mail. We will have the electronic pollbooks. Obviously the polling places and that pretty much covers it. And we are preparing for another crazy election. We are hoping, we are doing a lot of recruiting right now for election judges and field techs. We are going to have some videos out there and probably do a lot of social media. My office was really big on being out in the community at events and certain expos to sort of recruit people and let people know what was happening and obviously with coded 19 and we can't be out there, so we are going to rely a lot on our website and social media in different ways like that to reach people. I'm willing to answer any questions that you may have about the process about the legislation, about anything Will County specific and again I really appreciate your time and everybody that was able to join tonight so thank you so much for having me.

>> ... Okay we are going to have question and answer now. My mail delivery is spotty. What can I do?

>> Who wants to take that, Lauren or Tyler?

>> So, that's a hard question to answer. So I would again request a ballot by mail. But Lauren correct me if I'm wrong, even if there is an issue with your application and/or ballot being delivered you can technically surrender it in person if you have not cast it yet.

>> Absolutely yes you can you can surrender it in person at the polling place and vote that day . And if you can't surrender the unreturned vote by mail ballot, you will receive a provisional ballot. So you will still be able to cast your vote.

>> Okay next question. Can the ballots be sent to a PO Box? Lauren would you like to answer that?

>> I keep having trouble with my audio. I'm sorry about that.

>> Can the ballot be sent to a PO Box? can the application be, or the mailing be sent to a PO Box?

>> We send the application ballot to the address we have on file and it needs to be a mailing address.

>> So we wouldn't... Be sent to a PO Box

>> We request a mailing address.

>> Thank you. How are nursing homes voting Lauren?

>> We will be working with the nursing homes throughout the county to figure out how we will get them, you know, if they want to vote by mail ballots, we will work with the administrators there to get their applications signed because they need to fill out their own application but they can be delivered to us through the administrators, which is what we did actually in the primary too, in a lot of situations because everything happened and we want to devote... So we worked with the administrators at most of the nursing homes to make sure they were able to get the ballots.

>> Will every jurisdiction, will Will County have drop boxes for finished ballots?

>> We do not think we are going to have the dropbox option. If we do, it will be probably just at the County Clerk's office or at very few locations, only because we really need to make sure that we have a secure option for that. And with such a short amount of time to prepare and make sure we procure the best type of dropbox that we can, and it is all set and secure, we just are not sure about that option yet. It's likely we will not have them all throughout the county. If we do it will probably be at very few locations

>> Do you know what differences exist between the election authorities for instance between Cook County in Chicago and Will

>> Differences as far as...? I mean, a lot of the things we do are mandated by statute in the clerk's office. So I don't know.. I think people because the population you know, we have zone meetings like I said I talked to the [Coward County clerks] and we talk to each other a lot but Cook County is a whole different animal. So you know a lot of times what we decide to do is very different. Like I know that in some other counties they are buying inserters and sorters and large vote by mail equipment for this election because they are going to have way more than we will. We are talking to vendors like I mentioned we are having conversations with folks about what options we will have. We just will not have time to get everything in the office up and running, tested and fully working by November and feel confident that everything will work out so we are keeping the current process right now which is staff and part-time election workers that come in for the election. But yeah. So there are some differences. We are in constant communication with a lot of other clerks especially right now.

>> Are registered voters in Illinois who currently live in prisons able to vote by mail?

>> So I'm not entirely sure if they are able to vote by mail. I know there are quite a few organizations who do work with prisons in getting people registered and allowing them to vote. I'm not sure about vote by mail access though. That is a good question.

>> That is a good question. We can, I will get you an answer on that for sure.

>> Okay thank you. What happens if my signature is different now than it was when I first registered to vote?

>> So that, Tyler talked about that a little bit in his presentation about curing the signature. I mean that happens actually quite a bit people's signatures change often. So sometimes that signature does get rejected and in Will County we actually send a letter to say, you know, this is the situation and this is how you cure it with us. And it's a very simple procedure and we are able to get the new signature and verify it and send them their ballot.

>> Do all jurisdictions have electronic voting books? the way you do?

>> So I think, I'm not sure about all jurisdictions. I know from the people that I talk to, I think most of us have some form of electronic poll book now, but we still in Will County we still have the full long fill in the paper oval ballots. We still have the paper applications. I know like in DuPage County they have a poll book where you actually sign on the poll book with a stylus and in Will County we saw the paper applications we have the paper you sign and the fill in the oval, which we love. I don't know I think it is starting to be a little bit, I don't want to say obsolete, but there are other options that still have a paper trail. But I think most jurisdictions have some sort of electronic poll book now or iPad or something like that.

>> What facilities do you have for handicapped voters?

>> Well we do have the curbside voting. And previous, previously to the legislation that was, it was an option. It's always an option but it was like a call in advance to let us know so we can make sure we have somebody ready to assist you. Otherwise I mean, all of our polling places have to be ADA compliant. So I would say that that curbside voting is probably one of your best options for that.

>> Well thank you very much. If anyone has any other questions, you can send them to me by email. And we will get answers for you. I want to introduce myself now. I'm Ellen Kaplan, I'm the state, co-state policy advocate for the national Council of Jewish women South Cook section. I would like to thank Tyler St. Clare of Common Cause and Lauren Staley Ferry, County Clerk of Will County for being our guest speakers tonight. They have given us pertinent information that I hope you will share with others in order to educate them on the safety and security of the different voting options for the 2020 presidential election. Despite the pandemic, it is our duty as American citizens to vote in every election. I encourage each of you to go online now and apply for a mail in ballot on a government website. Though you won't receive your ballot until after September 24th, this may eliminate the need for mailing ballot applications to you, thereby saving money and spreading out the processing time for the election authority. Thank you to Lindsay Morris and Ari Solomon of NCJW's law office for the technical help in producing the webinar. Thank you to the promote the vote committee for helping to put this event together. And thank you to Mallory Sutton and the Links for joining us this evening. Thank you to our audience for attending this zoom meeting. Good night to all of you.