

## **PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **VOTING BY MAIL STRONGLY ENCOURAGED FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS CONCERNED ABOUT CORONAVIRUS**

Ford County – With Coronavirus (COVID-19) a continuing concern as the November 3, 2020 General Election approaches, voters are encouraged to consider voting by mail as a safe, secure and convenient option to in-person voting.

The Illinois General Assembly this year passed an election bill that provides many safeguards against the spread of coronavirus in the voting process for the November 3, 2020 General Election. Chief among them are provisions to increase voting by mail throughout the state.

Vote by mail **APPLICATIONS** will be mailed to all Ford County registered voters beginning on or before August 1<sup>st</sup>. If you do not receive a vote by mail application in the mail and you would like one sent to you, please contact the Ford County Clerk's Office at: (217) 379-9400. Additionally, an on-line application can be accessed at: [fordcounty.illinois.gov/county-clerk-recorder/absentee-application/](http://fordcounty.illinois.gov/county-clerk-recorder/absentee-application/) You can also email your application to: [clerk@fordcounty.illinois.gov](mailto:clerk@fordcounty.illinois.gov).

Ballots will be mailed to applicants beginning on or about September 24<sup>th</sup>, which is also the first day of Early Voting. The deadline for applying for a mail ballot is 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 29, 2020. After October 29<sup>th</sup>, voters can still receive a mail ballot by applying in person at the Ford County Clerk's office, 200 W. State St., Rm. 101, Paxton, IL. Ballots must be postmarked no later than midnight November 3, 2020 (Election Day) to be accepted, and properly postmarked ballots will be accepted through November 17, 2020.

The new law also establishes protocols to ensure proper verification of ballots before they are accepted and to inform voters in a timely manner if their ballot is rejected. This begins with a review of the voter's signature by a panel of three judges within two days of receipt of the ballot. A ballot may be rejected for an invalid signature only by unanimous decision of the judges.

The ballot may be rejected if all three judges agree that:

- The ballot envelope was delivered open
- The certification envelope contains no signature
- The voter has already cast a ballot
- The voter voted in person on Election Day
- The voter is not a duly registered voter

If a ballot is rejected based on a signature or lack of signature or because the ballot envelope was delivered opened, the voter must be notified within two days or within one day if the rejection occurs after Election Day. The new law contains provisions for the voter to address these problems.

If you would like to check the returned status of your vote by mail ballot, please contact the Ford County Clerk's Office at: (217) 379-9400 or by email at: [clerk@fordcounty.illinois.gov](mailto:clerk@fordcounty.illinois.gov).