



February 19, 2025

SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL TO:

Judiciary Committee, WV House of Delegates, judiciary@wvhouse.gov
House Judiciary Committee members *

TESTIMONY in Opposition to **HB 2400**

The League of Women Voters of West Virginia and the U.S. supports voting rights and opposes all forms of voter suppression. For this reason, we OPPOSE [HB 2400](#), which restricts access to absentee ballot applications.

This bill makes it illegal for any person or organization to distribute **absentee ballot applications** -- blank applications, **NOT** ballots. Applications would be available only to voters who request them directly. This makes no sense. Absentee applications are public documents available to anyone from the Secretary of State's website.

Absentee voting is essential for West Virginians with disabilities, those who lack transportation, the elderly, and residents of rural areas. These are demographics that characterize much of West Virginia's potential voting population.

Our state is known for its poor broadband penetration. This bill targets vulnerable West Virginians least likely to have computers and direct Internet access who might otherwise access absentee applications on their own. And the bill conflicts with Federal regulations designed to help nursing home residents vote. Taken together, this means voter suppression.

Evidence supports the reliability and security of absentee voting and making applications more freely available. For the 2020 primary election, due to relaxed rules during the COVID epidemic, WV voters had virtually unfettered access to absentee ballot applications. According to the Secretary of State at the time, no exceptional security concerns or evidence of fraud was revealed.

We are all aware that low voter turnout is typical for WV elections. Poor access to absentee voting is a contributing factor.

Since 2008, researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have been conducting the nationwide Survey of the Performance of American Elections (SPAEE) to understand voting behavior after every Presidential election. Obviously, the 2020 elections were atypical because COVID altered voting in virtually every state, including WV. Instead, it is instructive to look at 2016, the last year with "normal" voting procedures in place. (SOURCE: [2016 Survey of the Performance of American Elections](#))

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan volunteer organization that encourages informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate, but is engaged in local, state, and national issues of importance to our communities. The League works to influence public policy through advocacy and education. League membership is open to all men and women age 16 or older. More at: www.lwv.org (National) and www.lwvwy.org (WV).

The SPAE surveys a sample of registered voters -- those who voted and those who didn't -- in every state. Using data from SPAE, we can explore the reasons registered voters in WV reported for **not voting**.

The top reason for not voting in WV mirrored the reason for the U.S. as whole -- not liking the candidates or campaign issues.

However, the top three reasons for not voting **that were specific to WV** stood out. And these reasons all could be addressed by making absentee voting more accessible in our state:

1. Illness or disability (own or family's) - WV 62%, +29.1 points higher than U.S.
2. Too busy/had conflicting work, family, or school schedule - WV 59%, +21.7
3. Transportation problems - WV 40%, +9.1

More accessible absentee voting begins with making absentee applications more accessible.

The League of Women Voters urges you to vote down HB 2400. In WV, we need to be encouraging participation in elections, not setting up more barriers.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Ball'.

Judy K. Ball, PhD, MPA
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