

The article noted below has been shared with the MEA by President Emeritus William Dworkin.

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North Carolina Alliance for Retired Americans Sues State of North Carolina to Remove Barriers to Absentee Voting in Light of COVID-19 Pandemic

RALEIGH – Today, the North Carolina Alliance for Retired Americans, filed a lawsuit in the North Carolina Superior Court to protect the rights of older North Carolina voters during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Alliance was joined in the suit by seven individual plaintiffs. The defendants are the State of North Carolina, the North Carolina State Board of Elections and Damon Circosta, Chair of the North Carolina State Board of Elections.

The lawsuit alleges that the State of North Carolina's vote by mail requirements are burdensome and will force older voters to choose between protecting their health or casting a ballot they know will be counted.

The plaintiffs are asking the Court to mandate that the state of North Carolina:

- Permit counties to expand the early voting days and hours during the pandemic in order to increase opportunities to vote in person and minimize crowding, long lines, and the risk of exposure to COVID-19;
- Suspend the Witness Requirement for single-person or single-adult households;
- Require pre-paid postage on all absentee ballots and ballot request forms;
- Require election officials to count all absentee ballots mailed through USPS and postmarked by Election Day if received by county boards up to nine days after Election Day, the same day as the earliest deadline for the receipt of uniformed-service or overseas voters' ballots;
- Enjoin election officials from rejecting ballots based on alleged signature discrepancies or mismatches without adequate guidance and training from the State Board and without providing voters notice and an opportunity to cure their ballots;
- Allow voters to obtain assistance from other individuals or organizations of their choice in completing and submitting their absentee ballot applications; and
- Allow voters to obtain assistance from other individuals or organizations of their choice in delivering ballots to election officials

“The right to vote is sacred and older citizens take their civic responsibility seriously,” said Richard Fiesta, executive director of the Alliance for Retired Americans. “The Alliance for Retired Americans is committed to fight to ensure that every senior’s civil rights are protected. Seniors should not have to risk their health to cast a ballot that will actually be counted.”

“There are more than 1.5 million people over the age of 65 registered to vote in North Carolina -- and more than [25% of them live alone](#),” said William Dworkin, President of the North Carolina Alliance for Retired Americans. “Everyone has a right to vote safely during a pandemic without risking their health standing in long lines or trying to find someone to witness their mail-in ballot.”

The plaintiffs noted that the state of North Carolina anticipates an 800% increase in mail ballot requests as the coronavirus pandemic continues and that mail deliveries have been slowed due to the Postal Service’s operational and budget challenges. Further the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have said that Americans should expect a second deadly wave of infections in the fall and high-risk people, including older North Carolina residents, will be advised to practice self-isolation and social distancing in November and have no choice but to vote by mail.

This year the Alliance for Retired Americans and its state chapters have filed lawsuits to protect vote by mail and absentee voters in Florida, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin in addition to North Carolina.

A copy of the complaint is available [here](#).