



# **The 2020 Presidential Election: Plans & Preparations, Report #3**

**Minneapolis City Council  
Policy & Government Oversight Committee**

June 4, 2020

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## I. Voting in a Global Health Pandemic: The Impacts of COVID-19

On March 16, Mayor Frey declared a local public health emergency in response to the threat posed by the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). On March 25, Governor Walz issued a stay-at-home order for all Minnesotans under his previously declared statewide peacetime emergency. Today, just a little more than two months later, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reports that the COVID-19 outbreak has resulted in approximately 1.7 million cases confirmed in the United States and 100,446 deaths.<sup>1</sup> Across the nation, primaries have been delayed or rescheduled; some, such as the State of Wisconsin, pushed through despite warnings, resulting in chaos, confusion, and long lines of masked voters waiting hours outside polling places. Overnight, election officials had to adjust plans for the 2020 election to address the threat of a global health pandemic.

The Elections & Voter Services (EVS) Division has remained committed to its core mission of ensuring ballot access for all qualified voters. In preparation for the August 11 Primary and Ward 6 Special Election, EVS has taken steps to prepare a safe voting environment that satisfies the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC).<sup>2</sup> At a high level, these are summarized in the following paragraphs.

### **Personal Protective Equipment**

Collaborating with the departments of Health, Emergency Management, and Finance & Property Services, EVS has acquired—and continues to stockpile—necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure the safety of voters, election judges, and staff. This includes reusable cloth masks, disposable gloves, sanitizing solution and wipes, and protective acrylic barriers. Variations of these safety measures will be deployed at all sites where staff and election judges work. While specific arrangements at each site will not always be the same, they will be designed to provide appropriate protection for the specific program needs.

### **Social Distancing and Expanded Facility Use**

Current and future EVS facilities are being modified to designate social distancing guidelines. This means each space will have new, reduced capacity limits. As a result, EVS is working with partners in Finance & Property Services to identify available City property for potential expansion. Early discussions with the landlord for the 980 E Hennepin Ave property have been productive and helped to identify modifications that can be made to the building complex and parking lot.

### **Contingency Planning & Elections Emergency Plan**

EVS has developed a number of contingency plans, all developed in coordination with partners across the City enterprise, Hennepin County Elections, and the Office of Secretary of State (OSS). The OSS established a work group of county and city representatives—including the City of Minneapolis—to develop guidelines and best practices to conduct the upcoming elections safely and securely. Key assumptions reflect a projected voter turnout based on an analysis of historic trends, an anticipated significant increase in absentee participation (especially mail ballots), and requirements for social distancing and use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Additionally, EVS has prepared a Local Elections Emergency Plan, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 204B.181. Once adopted, that plan will become a part of the City's Emergency Operations Plan. A copy of the final, adopted plan must be filed with the Office of Secretary of State by July 1.

## II. 2020 Early Voting

Early Voting—technically “no-excuse absentee voting”—begins 46-days prior to each election, which affords Minnesota’s voters one of the nation’s longest timeframes to cast ballots before Election Day. For the August 11 State Primary and Ward 6 Special Election, Early Voting will begin at 8 a.m. on Friday, June 26, and conclude at 5 p.m. on Monday, August 10. There are two basic forms of Early Voting:

### **Vote-By-Mail**

The Vote-By-Mail (VBM) option allows voters to have an absentee ballot mailed to any location of the voter’s choice which must be returned by Election Day to be tallied in the final results.

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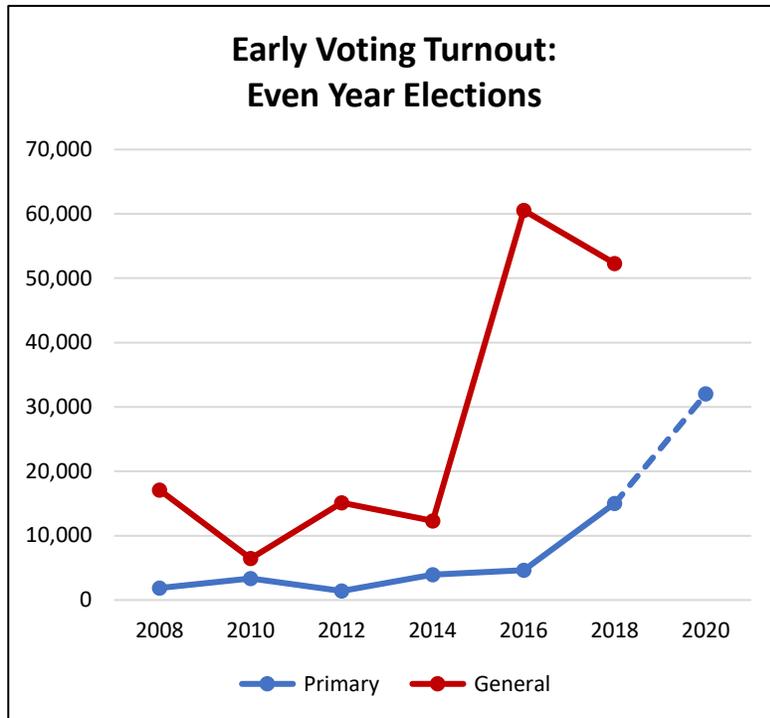
<sup>1</sup> According to CDC data posted to its website on Thursday, May 28, 2020

<sup>2</sup> For details, see CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/election-polling-locations.html>

**Early In-Person**

The Early In-Person (EIP) option allows voters to cast an absentee ballot in person, similar to the experience at the polls on Election Day.

In the past few cycles, Early Voting has accounted for 20 to 25 percent of all ballots cast. EVS anticipates this trend will continue in 2020. However, widespread concern about COVID-19 points to the strong potential for a dramatic spike in absentee balloting, particularly ballots submitted by mail. For the August 11 Primary, EVS is forecasting a citywide turnout of 25 percent, which is about 64,000 voters.<sup>3</sup> Because of concerns about COVID-19, EVS has doubled its projections for early voting to 50 percent for the primary, equating to approximately 32,000 voters choosing to cast ballots, either using VBM or EIP options. The charts below show Early Voting turnout for even-year primary and general elections (2008-2018). As shown, the projected 32,000 VBM early votes for the 2020 Primary is twice the number from the 2018 Primary.

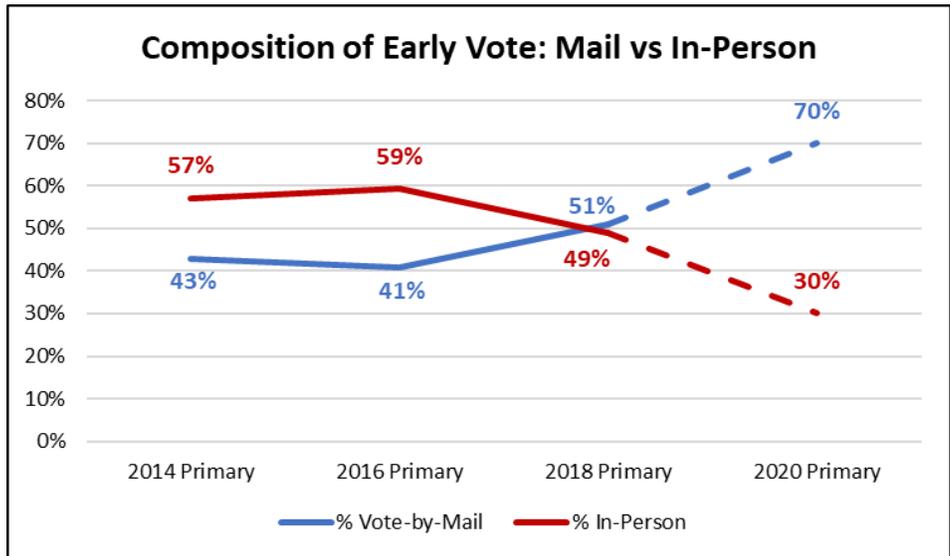


Year	Primary	General
2008	1,846	17,100
2010	3,352	6,446
2012	1,404	15,143
2014	3,930	12,279
2016	4,654	60,538
2018	15,008	52,313
2020	32,000**	

\*\*Estimated Turnout for the State Primary

EVS also anticipates that the composition of how early votes are cast will change. In previous years, EVS has experienced an average split of 45/55 in primary elections, with 45 percent VBM and 55 percent EIP absentee ballots, respectively. EVS believes this pattern will shift for the upcoming primary. EVS anticipates that up to 70 percent of all early votes will be VBM due to voter hesitation to cast a ballot in person.

<sup>3</sup> Based on a registered voter count of 258,931 on April 29, 2020



For the Ward 6 Special Election, EVS projects a 60 percent turnout, with heavy Early Voting participation. Since 2014, the average percentage of ballots cast early for all elections in Ward 6 has been 39 percent, in primary elections it has been 50 percent. During the 2017 Municipal Election, 55 percent of Ward 6 ballots were cast early. Given that Ward 6 already has a high percentage of voters choosing to vote early, EVS projects the potential for up to 65 percent of voter turnout in the special election to be absentee, with a high proportion of those to be VBM.

### Early Voting Reporting

As in prior years, EVS will provide a weekly statistical snapshot of the total absentee ballots released and returned. In addition, an interactive dashboard tracking early ballots will be available from the EVS website for the duration of the early voting period. This tool has been utilized since 2018 and allows voters to view early voting turnout trends based on how the ballot was cast.

#### 2020 Presidential Nomination Primary Absentee Balloting/Early Voting Statistics

Category of Balloting →	In-Person (Early Vote Ctr.)	Vote-By-Mail Out (Requested)	Vote-By-Mail In (Returned)	Ballots dropped off in-person	Ballots from Hennepin County	Total Ballots ISSUED*
<b>TOTALS</b>	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
<b>TOTAL VOTERS SERVED TO-DATE →</b>						XX
<i>This reflects the total number of completed ballots that have been returned by voters and received by the Elections &amp; Voter Services Division.</i>						

## Vote-By-Mail

Vote-by-Mail (VBM) is defined by the “three p’s”: paper, postage, and people. It is a complex, time-consuming, paper-intensive, and costly process that involves multiple steps which must be coordinated by teams of seasonal staffers. The paper comes in the form of the mandatory application form, precinct-specific ballot, instructions, and envelopes. The postage refers to the multiple postage-prepaid envelopes required to facilitate the release and return of VBM ballots. Finally, the people refers to the teams of seasonal election judges that, under EVS supervision, must handle each returned VBM ballot multiple times through each step in the process, which includes: securing returned absentee ballots until they can be opened and tallied according to statutory timelines; maintaining detailed chain-of-custody documentation; verifying the accuracy and completeness of voter data and entering this data into the Statewide Voter Registration System administered by the Secretary of State’s Office; accepting or rejecting the absentee ballot; preparing absentee ballots for tabulation; and serving as members of the City’s Absentee Ballot Board. Because of the “three p’s,” every absentee ballot adds considerable costs in production, time, and labor as well as secure storage needs and other resource requirements in comparison to ballots cast at the polls on Election Day.

VBM has five main tasks that all staff complete. Besides application processing, each task must be completed with at least one other person, and each task involves at least two of the “three p’s.” The following list outlines the average of what can be done for each task in one hour under normal circumstances:

1. Online Applications: one person can process an average of up to 75 online applications per hour, or roughly 525 online applications per day.
2. Paper Applications: one person can process an average of up to 25 paper applications per hour, or roughly 175 paper applications per day.
3. Mailing Ballots: A team of four can prepare an average of 75 VBM ballots to be mailed out per hour, or roughly 525 VBM ballots prepped for mail out per day.
4. Accepting & Rejecting: A team of two can accept or reject an average of up to 100 absentee ballots per hour, or roughly 700 received/completed absentee ballots per day.
5. Absentee Ballot Board: A team of three can prepare and process an average of up to 75 absentee ballots per hour, or roughly 600 absentee ballots per day for tabulation.

These figures do not include required preparation time before and after each task, nor do these averages include any of the accompanying administrative tasks, such as filing completed applications, which can and do vary significantly by day. In addition, the need to ensure social distancing among the staff teams and other safety precautions can be expected to adversely affect the efficiencies reflected in the averages for each of the tasks identified above.

### Changes in VBM due to COVID-19

With the expected increase in VBM participation, EVS will expand its mail operation into the current training room at EVS headquarters. This expansion is critical to ensure staff in the division’s busiest program will have the necessary space to observe guidelines for social distancing. While many daily tasks are done alone, there are some critical tasks that need to be done in pairs in accordance with Minnesota Election Law. Duties which must, under law, be completed by teams will adhere to social distancing guidelines by making sure each pair is adequately separated. All staff will be provided PPEs, including masks and gloves to be worn as they work. This will include staff assigned daily travel to collect mailed ballots from the USPS and from the Hennepin County Government Center. In addition to PPEs, surfaces and equipment used by staff will be disinfected after use every day, and hand sanitizer will be readily available, too. These steps will be taken to not only protect EVS staff, but also voters requesting VBM ballots.

The planned in-space expansion will also enable EVS to lease and store a third highspeed letter opener which will enhance operating efficiencies and reduce the time required to open multiple envelopes per VBM ballot. In March, staff researched various mail-processing equipment used in other jurisdictions that have a high volume of VBM, since this is an important means of reducing the labor-intensive aspect of mail balloting. Based on the findings, EVS will acquire the Opex 306 high-speed letter opener. Besides opening envelopes at a rated speed of up to 40,000 envelopes per hour, this equipment contains other features that will help EVS expedite the processing of its VBM ballots, resulting in some savings in labor and time. Perhaps most important, the equipment has the capability of date-stamping items which satisfies legal requirements and can batch-cut into bundles for more efficient auditing.

EVS will also increase its supply of VBM envelopes and update the Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMb) found on all return ballot envelopes to contain information specific to mail ballots. IMBs are important because they help USPS and election jurisdictions sort, track, and deliver material more efficiently. While IMBs were utilized before, USPS has recently created a new special sorting code specifically for returned VBM ballots. Prior to this, ballots were coded under first class mail and more likely to encounter delays.

## Changes to the Absentee Ballot Board

Under Minnesota Election Law, the Absentee Ballot Board (AB Board) begins processing absentee ballots one week prior to Election Day and must complete all tabulation by 8 p.m. on Election Night, giving the Board 7 days to tabulate all absentee ballots. In anticipation of a potential significant increase in VBM ballots, the State Legislature, through H.F. 3429, extended the absentee tabulation period to a total of 17 days, starting 14 days prior to Election Day and ending 2 days after. This extended amount of time will give the AB Board more time to process all absentee ballots.

## Changes in Health Care Facility Voting

Ballot access for those voters who are residents of the City’s 18 congregate care facilities is provided by the Health Care Facility team, a group of election judges trained to deliver ballots to such facilities starting 20 days prior to Election Day. As a result of Mayor Frey’s Emergency Regulation No. 2020-11, EVS will no longer be doing in-person visits for these facilities. And, where such sites previously had been used as polling places, alternate locations have been identified for all elections in 2020. Nevertheless, EVS remains committed to ensuring that these residents have an opportunity to vote and is developing appropriate plans in conjunction with management of those affected facilities. EVS understands there is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and will collaborate with each facility to implement a solution that meets their unique needs so that all residents who are eligible can participate if they wish to do so.

## Changes in Ballot Drop-Off and Agent Delivery

One final component of VBM, often overlooked, is the return of ballots to election officials. While every VBM ballot is accompanied by a pre-paid postage return envelope, many voters choose to physically return their completed ballot to election officials instead. Under Minnesota Election Law, voters may return VBM ballots for up to three other voters. In the 2018 Primary Election, 250 ballots were returned in this manner. Finally, starting seven days before the election, an agent designated by the voter may pick up and return a VBM ballot for those voters who qualify under the statutory provisions.

In order to maintain a safe work environment for both its staff and voters, EVS will limit the number of people allowed in its facility for Ballot Drop-Off and Agent Delivery to one person at a time. Those waiting for Agent Delivery will be given a number and will be asked to wait either outside the EVS facility or in their car until they are able to be assisted. EVS is also exploring ways to expand Ballot Drop-Off options outside the facility in the adjoining parking lot and possibly even at the Office of City Clerk in City Hall in order to both serve more voters and expand the number of sites available, especially in the final week before Election Day, when almost 90 percent of all drop-offs occur. These strategies will be complemented with communication strategies timed to remind voters of recommended deadlines to ensure that completed VBM ballots are received by Election Day.

## Early In-Person Voting

While EVS expects the percentage of Early In-Person (EIP) turnout to decline relative to the VBM, there remain many voters who nevertheless will choose to cast a ballot in person or who otherwise need to do so because of extra assistance and support available at the City’s Early Vote Center (EVC). And those voters have the legal right to do so. Starting this year, EVS will operate its Early Vote Center from its new headquarters, located at 980 E. Hennepin Avenue. Services hours are generally weekdays, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., beginning June 26. Additional in-person service hours are planned for the two Saturdays preceding the August 11 Primary—Saturday, August 1, and Saturday, August 8—from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Early Voting period ends at 5 p.m. on Monday, August 10. These in-person service days when the EVC is open and available to serve voters is reflected in the following monthly calendars.

JUNE 2020						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

JULY 2020						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

AUGUST 2020						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Maintaining this consistent level of service for EIP voters is important for two key reasons.

First, there are many voters who may not be familiar or comfortable with the VBM option; this includes first-time voters, voters who do not speak English as a primary language, voters who require assistance in marking their ballot, as well as voters who simply prefer to cast their ballot at the poll, whether early or on Election Day. These voters, like all voters, can rely on the assistance of trained election judges to ensure their ballot is cast securely, as the voter intends, and is counted.

Second, by offering EIP opportunities over the entire 46-day Early Voting period, EVS is better able to reduce the strain and demand on polling places on Election Day. This advantage is especially important in light of the social distancing requirements and health concerns for voters and election judges at the polls on Election Day. Every vote cast early, whether by mail or in-person, helps reduce the potential for lines and wait times for voters that would otherwise take place at the polls on Election Day.

EVS is carefully evaluating the physical layout for its EVC to create enough space for staff and voters to enter, interact, and exit with enough space for recommended social distancing guidelines, as well as other personal safety precautions. These changes will include:

1. Line markings to keep people six feet apart, aligned with recommended social distancing guidelines;
2. Additional spacing between computer stations to protect voters and staff;
3. Gloves and masks issued to each election judge to wear while working in the EVC;
4. Face-to-face service areas outfitted with acrylic barriers;
5. Disposable masks being made available to voters (those who do not present with a mask);
6. Voting booths adequately spaced throughout the EVC;
7. Separate entrance and exit paths into and out of the EVC, using directed one-way paths to minimize voter interaction; and
8. Regular cleaning of all surfaces between use, including voting booths, stations, tables, clipboards, door handles, and even pens.

Additionally, in response to concerns about congestion and COVID-19, EVS plans to expand opportunities for voters to vote from their vehicle without needing to enter the EVC. Like all polling places, the EVC offers curbside voting, and the new EVS facility has ample parking available for voters who choose to use curbside voting as a safer option, whether due to mobility challenges or for any other reason. EVS is already in talks with the property management and neighboring businesses to create a plan that will allow for this expanded voter service outside of the EVC, both for those voting and for those dropping off VBM ballots. While there are some logistical challenges, any expansion of curbside voting, drive-thru voting, and ballot drop-off options will help everyone maintain safe distance while ensuring ballot access for all voters.

EVS expects that in-person voters will have no problems adapting to these new processes even if it may take longer to cast a ballot, especially since the Early Voting period for the August primary spans the summer months when time waiting outdoors should usually be tolerable. Strategic communication on what to expect when voting with any of these in-person options will also help mitigate risks, manage expectations, and keep voters and staff safe. Since the August election has a lower projected turnout, EVS is confident that these measures can be implemented within existing space. Depending on the success of these new and enhanced initiatives, EVS would look to replicate (and potentially expand) these options for the November Presidential Election.

### **III. Precincts and Polling Places**

Of all its programs, the COVID-19 pandemic has required the most creative and adaptive approaches to plans around voting at polling places on Election Day. That's because, despite increases in both VBM and EIP absentee balloting, the vast majority of Minneapolis voters still prefer to cast ballots in person at their assigned polling place on Election Day. There is a sentimental association with Election Day that strikes at the heart of concepts such as democracy and community, and it is unknown how the context of administering an election during a global health pandemic may impact those deeply ingrained habits and preferences across multiple generations of voters. What is known is that in-person voting in polling places on Election Day is a serious challenge, as demonstrated by other states and local jurisdictions over the past several months.

In theory, there should be little difference in the experience of voters opting to use Early In-Person Voting prior to Election Day and those casting ballots at the polls on Election Day. Except for the impact of scale. Whereas EIP voting is centralized in one location tightly managed by a team of highly trained and experienced judges with ample resources and supplies, Election Day is a completely decentralized operation spread across 134 different precincts operating in 125

separate facilities by teams of elections judges with varying levels of experience with little support available from headquarters (primarily limited to phone calls). It is little wonder that Election Day planning is often compared to a military exercise.

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 204B.175, a local election official may make changes to designated polling places in the event of an emergency. Under this provision and the broader implications available under a Local Elections Emergency Plan [Minn. Stat. § 204B.181], EVS plans to consolidate multiple precincts into shared facilities, thereby limiting the number of sites that need to be operated on Election Day and also reducing the number of qualified election judges needed to staff those polling places. Through consolidation, the plan is to reduce the number of in-person polling places for Election Day—both in August and November—to the fewest number that will still assure equitable ballot access to all qualified voters.

Current plans focus on leveraging existing partnerships with the Minneapolis Public School District (Special School District No. 1) and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board to use their facilities as the primary locations for polling places. These facilities offer numerous advantages: they are large facilities that are well-known and recognized with good public signage, centrally located in communities, spread across all wards, are ADA-compliant with sufficient parking available, and can usually accommodate the defined polling place activities as well as offer additional capacity for voter queuing indoors (in unpredictable weather). EVS anticipates that each consolidated location will house two to three precincts. This will enable EVS to offer the same high standards of voter service in a safe environment that adheres to social distancing requirements. Following the August primary, EVS will assess the functionality of these consolidated polling sites and be better positioned to fine-tune its plans for Election Day voting for the general election in November. The goal would be to use the same sites for both August and November elections to ensure consistency and predictability in messaging and notices and to avoid voter confusion and frustration from potential changes. Based on a projected voter turnout of 32,000 voters on Election Day, EVS assumes each consolidated precinct will serve between 300 and 1,300 voters, with the average being 715 voters. That is well within the sizing standards recommended by the Secretary of State.

Under the current proposal, a total of 95 polling places would be located in 35 MPS facilities, 24 MPRB facilities, 19 worship centers, 1 City-owned facility (the Downtown Early Vote Center), 2 combined school/park facilities (Windom Park/Pillsbury School and Kenwood School/Park), and 14 miscellaneous locations. Voters will be assigned to a consolidated polling place based on geographic proximity within their ward. All registered voters will receive postal notification of the change from Hennepin County, as required by state law. In addition to this postcard, EVS will develop messaging as part of its overall Voter Outreach and Education (VOE) plan, including partnering with the City Communications and Neighborhood & Community Relations departments to develop specific outreach initiatives to inform voters about these consolidated polling place locations while still prioritizing Vote-By-Mail as the primary option voters should consider.

## IV. Election Judges

The success of any election is dependent upon EVS's ability to recruit, train, manage, and deploy the required number of election judges. These workers organize the polling place, administer check-in and verification procedures, ensure proper handling of ballots, manage voting equipment, assist voters, and deal with a myriad of other issues that occur at the polls. For the August 11 Primary, EVS projects the need for up to 1,100 election judges to staff the 95 polling sites across the city, which is in addition to the number of seasonal staff needed for VBM and EIP operations prior to Election Day. With nearly 34 percent of its corps of experienced election judges fitting into the 60+ age group (roughly one-third of all election judges), EVS is pursuing options to plan and conduct an election that may see a potential shortage of workers.

### Election Judge Recruitment and Deployment

Recruitment has begun for both the August Primary and November General Election. An initial message from EVS was sent out on April 14 to reassure election judges of the Division's work to develop contingency plans that assures appropriate health and safety measures while still focusing on the requirements for a successful election that serves all qualified voters. Feedback from judges was overall positive, with comments such as:

*"Super well thought out and impressive. You have an amazing team; we're just lucky to observe. AND this too shall pass. Thanks for the extra effort in your jobs now to ensure we can all vote safely - must be quite the lift."*

*"It doesn't surprise me that you guys are being very proactive and thoughtful – that's just what I would expect from such a top-notch group."*

*“Thank you all for being on top of it! There’s good reason why Minneapolis is nationally known for its fair and excellent election processes.”*

A second message—sent on May 4 —requested election judges to confirm whether they planned to work this year. Impressively, within the first two weeks, the following responses were received:

<i>Status: 05/15/2020</i>	August 11 State Primary	November 3 General Election
Planning to work	938	948
Not planning to work	76	39

While more responses are still expected over the next few weeks, early indications show that large portions of our corps of veteran election judges are not only willing but are ready (and eager) to serve voters. EVS is also partnering with multiple departments to assure the same level of PPE and other safety measures are being planned for the EVS headquarters in support of VBM and EIP operations are available for judges working the consolidated polling places on Election Day.

## **Election Judge Training**

Under Minnesota Election Law, all judges must complete training and certification prior to each election. In addition to EVS’s core curriculum, training for the August 11 Primary will address new health and safety procedures, including mandatory use of PPE; frequent disinfection of all surfaces, equipment, and supplies; and the provision of disposable masks and hand sanitizer to all voters upon entry and exit of the polling place (modeling the foam-in, foam-out system used in hospitals). Judges will also receive instructions on maintaining social distancing in voter lines both inside and outside of the immediate voting area.

For the first time, election judge training will be delivered almost exclusively online. EVS had already been preparing an online training option prior to the pandemic, and those early efforts are now being expanded. Election judges will access training using the Election Judge Worker Portal in the EVS Elections Management System. Training will consist of videos and quizzes. The software allows EVS to verify that election judges completed the course, as well as how they did on quizzes. Despite the push for online training, limited in-person classes will still be required to train new head judges as well as poll book and registration specialists on handling equipment. All in-person training will be structured as small classes with a maximum ten judges in each class and will adhere to social distancing recommendations.

## **Student Election Judge Program**

### **Recruitment**

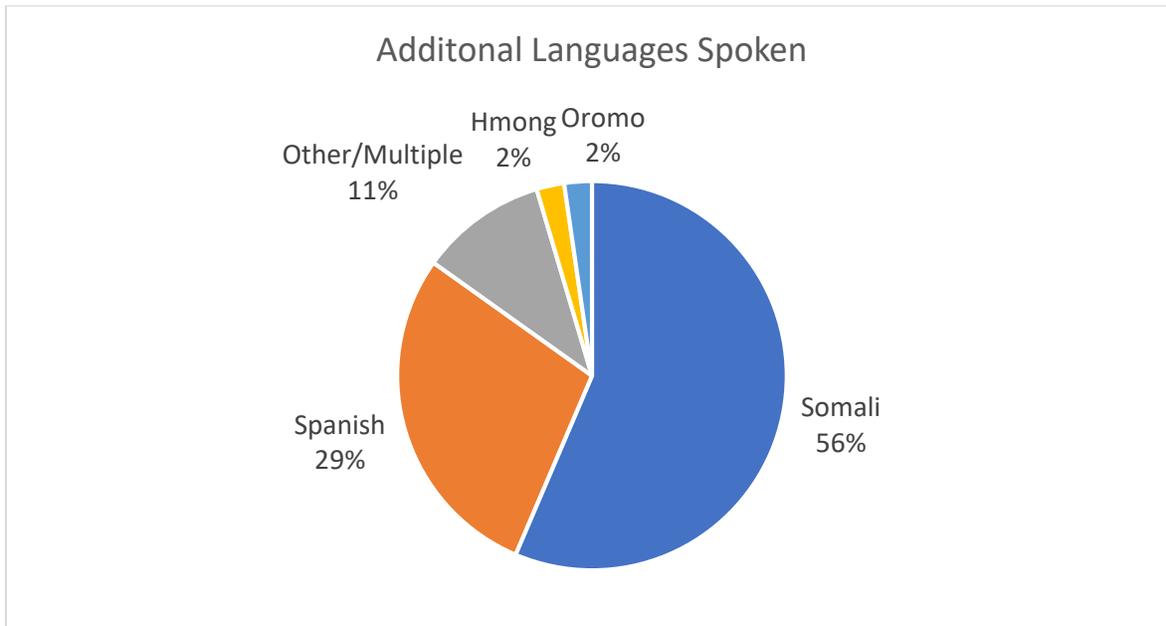
The Student Election Judge Program brings a pool of 680 student judges into the mix. Almost half of these students are from the class of 2020, 40 percent from the class of 2021, and the remainder from the class of 2022. Because of concerns linked to COVID-19, EVS will communicate with parents and guardians about the safety precautions being implemented and reconfirm whether students will be allowed to participate in this year’s elections. Preliminary indications are that most student judges remain interested in serving.

### **Training**

EVS has partnerships with advisors at 16 area schools who provide ongoing support and coordination for students who wish to participate in the program. Two schools—Cristo Rey Jesuit High School and Ubah Medical Academy—provide additional support to their students by connecting the experience to the curriculum and having Elections Ambassadors (experienced student election judges) provide extra training and support to their classmates who are first-time judges. As election judge training moves to an online format this summer, EVS will host online school-based gatherings to connect students in partner schools to answer any questions or concerns about the experience.

### **Language skills**

Student judges are an invaluable source of workers with secondary language skills, a critical service for in-person voters at the polls. During the 2020 Presidential Nominating Primary, roughly 53 percent of judges recruited from high schools spoke at least one other language in addition to English. The chart on the next page shows the percentage breakdown of those languages.



## V. Voter Outreach & Education

In 2013, EVS launched its first Voter Outreach & Education (VOE) program to ensure all voters were “election ready.” Over the past seven years, those initiatives have been refined, solidified, and expanded and the VOE program today is a key component of each election cycle, focused especially on outreach and education in communities that have historically been under-represented in voter participation.

This year, as with other EVS programs, the VOE program must address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. That means delivering accurate, timely, clear communications that address concerns, provide facts and useful information, and get voters the resources they need to participate. First and foremost, it means promoting the Vote-By-Mail option as much and as broadly as possible, aligned with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Recognizing that many voters may not fully understand their rights to request a VBM absentee ballot, EVS is developing messaging to help educate voters about this option and how it works. At the same time, EVS is coordinating a series of communications to help manage expectations and provide helpful information for those voters choosing to vote in person, whether before or on Election Day. That messaging will include detailed steps voters can take to help protect themselves and others while voting. As demonstrated in other jurisdictions, it will be of utmost importance for EVS to be viewed as a trusted source of accurate and factual information. The **#TrustedInfo2020** campaign will continue to be a platform for EVS to use to shape and expand upon messaging for the State Primary.

### Focus on COVID-19 Messaging

EVS has a basic communications plan to help ensure voters are “election ready.” This year, that basic plan must be tailored to the realities of voting in a health pandemic. The specific messages and campaigns that EVS will deliver for the August 11 Primary include:

#### Primary Messages: May 4 – August 3

1. Be safe: stay home and vote by mail. All Minnesota voters are eligible to vote by mail.
  - To minimize direct contact with others, the CDC encourages you to vote by mail.
  - Starting May 13, you may apply online for your ballot.
  - We’ll mail your ballot to you about 6 weeks before Election Day.
2. In Minneapolis, you have three options for voting with different levels of direct contact.
  - Vote early by mail = lowest level of direct contact: just you, a paper ballot, and your witness;
  - Vote early in person = some direct contact, but minimizes the number of individuals with whom you may have contact; and
  - Vote on Election Day = greatest potential for direct contact, with the potential for wait times that may be longer than usual.

### **Secondary Message: June 29 – August 3**

Voting by mail is easy when you remember four things:

1. You need a witness there when you complete your ballot. The witness can be either a registered Minnesota voter or a notary from any state.
2. If we send you a voter registration application, complete and return it with your ballot even if you think you are already registered.
3. Mail everything back as soon as possible using the postage-paid envelope. Anything we get after Election Day can't be counted, regardless of the postmark date.
4. Confirm your ballot was received and counted online.

### **Election Day Messaging: August 3 – August 11**

We're in this together, and we've worked hard to make your polling place safe on Election Day. Here's what you can expect at your polling place:

1. You will be offered hand sanitizer as you enter and exit the polling place. If you don't have one, a disposable mask will be offered to you.
2. All poll workers will wear masks and gloves.
3. All surfaces, equipment, and supplies will be regularly cleaned with disinfectant.
4. You are encouraged to consider voting outside of peak times to limit your exposure to other voters; peak hours at polls are typically 7 to 9 a.m. and 5 to 8 p.m.

EVS will also provide messaging to help manage expectations for polling place etiquette, which will include the recommendation that voters not vote in person if they feel ill, explaining that voters will need to maintain social distance in the polls, and acknowledging that voter wait times may be longer as election judges work to serve all voters.

### **Website & Social Media**

The EVS website features a new COVID-19 landing page. This page features some of the strategic messaging created to educate and inform voters about safety precautions, information about how to request a Vote-By-Mail absentee ballot, and answers to some of the most frequently asked questions and concerns EVS has identified. Beyond this new COVID-19 landing page, EVS restructured certain webpages that are anticipated to be of increased importance this year: Early Voting, voter registration, and the 2020 Election Calendar.

Complementing its website, EVS manages Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts to extend its outreach initiatives. These social platforms offer an interactive approach positioned to attract, engage, and inform voters, as well as connect with other jurisdictions and elections administrators. EVS has a social media plan that includes timely messages that incorporate photos, videos, news articles, and infographics. EVS will work with City Communications to plan and schedule key messages that will be re-shared between accounts.

### **Digital Communications (Radio, Television, Email, Nextdoor)**

Beyond the website and social media, the EVS VOE strategy for the State Primary will rely heavily on other means of digital marketing and communications at a time where in-person outreach and engagement is not available. The partnerships with City Communications and Neighborhood and Community Relations (NCR) remain vital in sharing key messages with residents across the city. Both departments bring important channels that can be leveraged to share messages to neighborhood groups, community organizations, and other subscribers.

EVS will work with both departments to schedule placement on cultural radio (La Raza, KMOJ, WIXK, KALY) and seek opportunities to have messages run on various local television channels (in multiple languages). Utilizing these cultural media outlets will be important to ensure messaging is distributed to all Minneapolis residents in their preferred language through a trusted communication channel. EVS will also partner with NCR on distributing messages through neighborhood newsletters. Through these newsletters, NCR and EVS will be able to reach voters representing communities which have participated at lower levels historically and which have experienced greater barriers to engagement and participation in elections.

Another avenue EVS hopes to leverage this year, with support from City Communications, is the use of the Nextdoor application. Nextdoor is the online "neighborhood hub" for trusted connections and the exchange of helpful information, goods, and services. This could be another excellent way to deliver important elections information through an online and digital platform, focusing on specific neighborhood needs.

## **Earned and Paid Media**

As in prior years, EVS will partner with City Communications to extend key messaging through media channels with both earned and paid media. Local media outlets play an important role in informing voters about election-related issues, and EVS needs to use these wide-reaching channels to reach the greatest number of voters with core factual messages about voting during the COVID-19 pandemic. EVS expects to collaborate with City Communications to have coverage on local television channels, and in print (and digital) news outlets. City Communications may also help EVS elevate messaging through digital billboard advertisements as was done for the Presidential Nomination Primary in March.

A unique feature that social media provides is the ability to run targeted advertisements. In this time of social distancing, EVS will leverage this digital marketing tool to deliver key messages. EVS will work with City Communications to craft these digital communications (advertisements) ahead of the State Primary. These advertisements will be targeted to specific users by age, gender, location, etc. to reach voters who typically experience more barriers to voting and participate at lower rates. This will allow EVS to share timely messages and meet voters where they are right now—online and on social media.

## **Minneapolis 311**

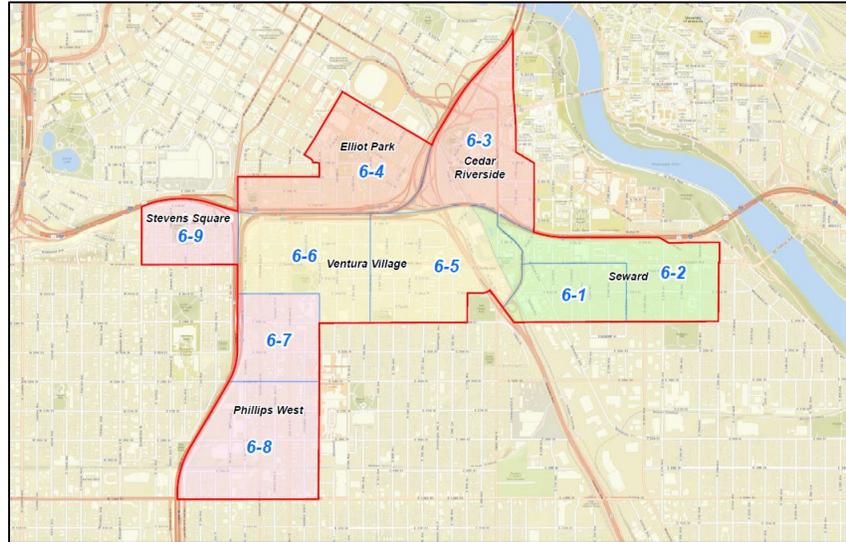
Minneapolis 311 is a long-time EVS partner. Together, the two departments designed knowledge articles and specialized scripts which have enabled 311 agents to navigate a variety of election-related topics. This has relieved EVS of hundreds of calls each cycle so the Division can focus its resources on the priority functions associated with administering election processes. Anticipating an increase in calls and questions about Vote-By-Mail absentee options, EVS will conduct additional training for 311 agents. This training will provide 311 with the same messaging EVS will deliver, encouraging voters to consider mail options and how and where to find the information needed to do so.

## VI. 2020 Special Election – Council Ward 6 Ranked-Choice Voting

The vacancy in the Ward 6 Council seat will be filled in a special election conducted in conjunction with the August 11 State Primary. EVS has worked to ensure Ward 6 voters will be able to participate in this special election using the same processes—and even the same ballot—as the State Primary. Since Minneapolis uses Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV) for its municipal elections, and given this is the first special election using RCV, it was unclear whether the two ballot styles could be combined. EVS

collaborated with Hennepin County on the unique ballot design and layout and is confident that a combined ballot format is possible.

Ward 6 covers parts of the Stevens Square, Ventura Village, Phillips West, Elliot Park, Seward, and Cedar Riverside neighborhoods and has had strong voter turnout in both municipal and primary elections. Additionally, Ward 6 voters often take advantage of Early Voting at higher rates than other wards. EVS expects this trend to continue in what will likely be a competitive election for the vacant seat.



### Voter Outreach & Education

EVS is planning strategic communications to target Ward 6 voters about the special election, particularly around how to mark an RCV ballot. These communications will primarily be digital, using the EVS website and social media platforms. In order to prioritize its limited resources, EVS plans to collaborate with FairVote Minnesota to promote voter education and engagement for the Ward 6 Special Election. FairVote Minnesota will take the lead on voter education in Ward 6, whether that be through phone banking, online newsletters, or in-person door knocking (using social distancing guidelines). EVS is working with FairVote Minnesota on the creation of a postcard to inform voters about RCV, modeling the 2017 RCV Promo Card (shown below). That postcard will be produced in both English and Somali and will direct voters to the EVS website or Minneapolis 311 for more information.

### HOW TO VOTE

You will use ranked-choice voting this election. **Choose up to three candidates for each office and rank them in order of your preference.** You can choose just one candidate if you don't have a 2nd or 3rd choice. Your 2nd and 3rd choices count only if your 1st choice loses.

1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
<input type="radio"/> Lucy	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Lucy	<input type="radio"/> Lucy
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Zac	<input type="radio"/> Zac	<input type="radio"/> Zac
<input type="radio"/> Omar	<input type="radio"/> Omar	<input type="radio"/> Omar
<input type="radio"/> Asha	<input type="radio"/> Asha	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Asha

### HOW IS MY BALLOT COUNTED?

**1** Election officials count 1st choice votes. If a candidate gets over 50%, they win. If not, the ranked-choice counting begins in step 2.

**Step 1**  
No candidate has over 50% of the 1st choice votes. Counting continues in step 2.

**2** The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Those votes transfer to each voter's 2nd choice candidate. If a candidate now has over 50% of the vote, they win.

**Step 2**  
Zac's votes transfer to his voters' 2nd choice candidates. Lucy is now the winner.

**3** If necessary, the process in step 2 repeats until a candidate wins. In each round, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Those votes transfer to each voter's next choice of candidate (if any).

## **Ballot Design**

As noted, this is the first special municipal election using RCV since Ranked-Choice Voting was implemented in 2009. Because the special election is being administered in conjunction with the state primary, as required by state law, the two ballots must be combined. Working with Hennepin County, the entity responsible for ballot design and production, EVS was successful at adapting the RCV layout to ensure the special municipal election could fit within the design parameters for a statewide primary election. That required a modification to the layout used in prior RCV elections (2009, 2013, and 2017). The front of the state primary ballot is reserved for partisan races, so the Ward 6 Special Election will appear on the reverse with other nonpartisan races, such as School Board and Judicial Offices. Since no primary is required with RCV, the special election will have a write-in vote option. The other races on the ballot will not because they are all primary contests. The three ranking options will all be formatted in a single vertical column, rather than spread horizontally across the standard three-column ballot design (as in prior RCV elections). Voters will still be able to rank their first, second, and third choices in said column, top to bottom. This ballot orientation ensures all three rankings in the special election appear together for voters using the ballot marking device, as well as displayed together on the tabulator results tape.

## **Ranked-Choice Voting Results and Tabulation**

As with past RCV elections, the raw results from each of the three rankings will be available on the Secretary of State's results page on Election Night along with the other State Primary results. Once all results are in, the maximum possible threshold will be calculated (defined as half of the total ballots cast in the special election + 1), and the first-choice rankings in the special election will be used to determine if it is possible to declare an unofficial winner on Election Night. If no candidate reaches the maximum possible threshold on Election Night, EVS will conduct RCV tabulation using the Minneapolis Method starting the next morning, Wednesday, August 12. Tabulation will take place at the EVS headquarters (980 E Hennepin Ave) and will start after receipt of the Cast Vote Record file from Hennepin County. Two tabulation teams with two staff members each will independently tabulate results. A tabulation manager will provide direction and coordination between the two tabulation teams, and the Director of Elections will oversee the entire process.

Because there is only one RCV race, tabulation is expected to be completed on Wednesday, August 12. Once complete, unofficial results will be published on the EVS website and promoted through its social media channels. These reported results are not official until the City Canvassing Board certifies the election.

As with all EVS operations, RCV tabulation will be conducted with measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Staff involved with tabulation will be issued masks and gloves and surfaces will be disinfected before, during, and after tabulation. Connecting computer monitors will enable a team to view a duplicated screen while sitting apart from one another, helping staff maintain distance to ensure health and safety.