



## **Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement Hearing on 2020 General Election Preparations**

The 2020 general election is 104 days away, but state and local election officials began preparations for this fall's elections well before this year began.

As a former Missouri Secretary of State and Greene County Clerk and Election Authority, I administered elections and know how much advance planning and preparations elections require and the limited resources that are available for the task. I also know that election officials prepare for natural disasters and other eventualities as a matter of course. But, this year, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken the pressures and challenges of election preparations to a whole new level. Already limited resources must be put to use, not just to ensure the safety and security of our democracy, but to ensure the health and safety of individual voters and election workers are not at risk.

While elections during a pandemic are not unprecedented – midterm elections were conducted during the 1918 flu pandemic and, more recently in 2009, a handful of states held off-year elections during the H1N1 flu pandemic – it was certainly unexpected. Since the March 13 declaration of a national emergency, election officials and state officials around the country have addressed the pandemic by:

- postponing elections;
- expanding early and absentee voting programs;
- relocating polling places away from places where individuals at high risk live;
- working with health officials to ensure that polling places are properly cleaned and sanitized and that the appropriate personal protective equipment is available at polling places and ballot processing facilities;
- recruiting additional election workers; and
- implementing other programs, like curbside voting programs, that help make voting less of a health risk.

Election officials have done all of this on top of continuing efforts to ensure that this country's elections are secure from malicious actors who seek to attack voting

infrastructure and spread disinformation. All of these actions have been taken to ensure that every voter can cast their ballot safely and securely in this year's elections.

That's something that everyone here can agree on: voters in this country must be able to cast a ballot safely and securely and without putting their health at risk – both this fall in the general election and in the remaining primary elections leading up to the general election.

To that end, Congress has provided funds to election officials to assist with administering elections during the pandemic. On top of the \$805 million that Congress previously provided for election security, \$400 million was appropriated specifically to assist with pandemic-related election expenses in the CARES Act. This money was provided without any federal policy mandates, in keeping with our nearly 250-year history of state-run elections. Today, I look forward to hearing how that money has been put to use and what additional financial assistance is needed.

We are fortunate to have four great witnesses joining us today. I look forward to hearing what is being done to ensure that Americans can safely cast a ballot in the general election.

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