

The VoteSafe Act of 2020

This year, multiple primary elections were besieged by public health concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Georgia](#) delayed its primary by nearly two months. In [Illinois](#), at least 50 polling sites opened late, and hundreds of poll workers were absent due to COVID-19. One day before the Wisconsin primary, the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) blocked a court order that would have extended the period for voters to return absentee ballots—forcing voters who had applied for but did not receive ballots to vote in person at the limited polling locations that were open. In [Milwaukee](#), voters experienced long lines and hours-long wait times, after the number of polling places was reduced from 180 to five. The ongoing public health emergency highlights the need to ensure that every state can conduct a safe and reliable election process.

Reasonable and uniform national standards for no-excuse absentee voting and early in-person voting are *both* critical to ensuring Americans can vote during the pandemic. In addition to meeting baseline federal standards, Congress must give states the funding necessary to guarantee that voting is safe, accessible, and meets the needs of voters. Funding must also ensure that voters who face the greatest impediments to casting their ballots safely and reliably during the pandemic are protected, including voters with disabilities, African American voters, language minority voters, Native American voters, and rural voters.

That is why Congress must provide a comprehensive solution that helps states expand voting options and provides the financial assistance necessary to ensure voters do not have to choose between their health and their right to vote. Accordingly, Senator Kamala D. Harris is introducing **The VoteSafe Act of 2020**, a bill that sets uniform federal standards so Americans can vote safely during the pandemic, while also giving states the flexibility to address the needs of their voting population.

The bill:

- Requires states to **permit no-excuse mail-in absentee voting for the 2020 elections and guarantees minimum due process protections for these voters.**
- Requires states to maintain an **early in-person voting period of at least 20 days for the 2020 elections.**
- **Authorizes \$2.5 billion for states to meet their obligations to offer no-excuse absentee voting and early in-person voting.**
- **Provides \$2.5 billion in additional discretionary grant funding for states to further improve the safety and accessibility of voting options during the pandemic, including:**
 - To ensure that elections are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including improving the accessibility of absentee voting by mail.
 - To ensure adequate assistance for language minority voters.
 - To ensure voting access for American Indian, Alaska Native, and rural voters.
 - To implement and promote curbside voting.
 - To implement a maximum wait time standard, or publish current wait times for voters.
 - To improve polling place and line management.
 - To provide for the training and recruitment of poll workers.
 - To improve access to voter registration.