



**PRESS RELEASE from the
LIBERTY JUSTICE CENTER**

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Cook County Republican Party files lawsuit challenging Illinois' new Vote By Mail program

***Lawsuit seeks to block program based on state's inability to administer critical
programs, ensure a fair and accurate election***

CHICAGO (Aug 10, 2020) – The Cook County Republican Party has filed a federal lawsuit challenging Illinois' new vote-by-mail program, arguing that the validity of election results will be in doubt if this program moves forward.

The lawsuit is *Cook County Republican Party v. Pritzker*, and it was filed today in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. The party is represented by attorneys from the Liberty Justice Center, a national law firm that has filed three other lawsuits against Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker so far this year.

“Every American has a fundamental, constitutional right to vote – but that right is abridged when the election is marred by fraud or disenfranchisement,” said **Pat Hughes, president and co-founder of the Liberty Justice Center**. “The purpose of this lawsuit is to ensure the accuracy and integrity of Illinois’ elections. While there has always been a certain cynicism about elections in Illinois and particularly in Chicago, we must fight to ensure the will of the people is honored, and that Illinois voters can be confident in the election process.”

The Vote By Mail program was instituted under the guise of protecting Illinoisans from contracting COVID-19 when they visit a polling place in person. However, prior to this program Illinois already had in place a voting process for those who wish to not vote in person: absentee ballots. The state has allowed voters to request an absentee ballot for any reason for 10 years. The lawsuit argues that this new program, in which millions of Illinoisans are offered vote-by-mail ballots, open the door to widespread election fraud such as vote harvesting.

“More than any other state in the nation, Illinois has a track record of both corruption and incompetence – and its residents have no reason to believe that the government can conduct an honest and accurate vote-by-mail in the upcoming election,” said **Sean Morrison, chairman of the Cook County Republican Party**. “This is a crucial election year for Illinoisans, not just because of the presidential race but because they will be asked to vote on the governor’s graduated income tax referendum. The best way to proceed this November without inviting massive potential for fraud and disenfranchisement is for people who are uncomfortable voting in person – a perfectly reasonable position – to request absentee ballots.”

The program was introduced and passed by the Illinois General Assembly within 72 hours. Normally, major initiatives go through robust debate, public comment is invited and these issues are discussed in the public sphere. Instead, with the vote-by-mail program Democrat legislators took a February 2019 bill,

stripped it of its original language and purpose and substituted in language for the vote-by-mail program. It passed the Illinois House on May 19 and the Illinois Senate the next day.

Two weeks after Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed Vote By Mail into law, he personally donated \$51.5 million to a ballot initiative committee tasked with soliciting votes for his signature policy proposal: a graduated income tax system that would allow Illinois to tax income at increasingly higher rates. The committee is sending out mailers encouraging voters to use the Vote By Mail program, and WTTW quoted the head of the group as saying: "I'm not going to lie ... we want individuals who are going to support the fair income tax."

Beyond the obvious partisanship of the Vote By Mail program, identical initiatives across the country have already raised serious concerns:

- It was reported last week that the ballots of 84,000 New York City voters in the presidential primary were disqualified, according to new figures released by the Board of Elections.
- Also in New York, many voters never received their mail-in ballots for the July primary election and were instead forced to go to the polls – even though they were concerned about COVID.
- Potential disenfranchisement: Illinois' Vote By Mail program depends on partisan election judges with little expertise — including minors as young as 16 years-old — to determine the validity of signatures and therefore the ballots themselves. As a result, it opens the door to scores of ballots potentially being disqualified and voters being disenfranchised en masse. Already, nearly 30,000 mail-in ballots in California's March presidential primary were disqualified when election judges determined the ballots either lacked a signature or the signature did not match the voter's registration. And voters have no idea whether their ballot was disqualified because of supposed signature issues.
- Ballot harvesting: Illinois' law does nothing to prohibit paid, partisan political operatives from collecting and submitting completed ballots to elections officials. As a result, voters are ultimately disenfranchised when the political operatives who collect ballots choose to deliver only those ballots who vote for their favored candidate or issue. This practice, called ballot harvesting, resulted in an overturned U.S. Congressional election in North Carolina in 2018. More recently, in July of this year a municipal election in Patterson, New Jersey, was still undecided two months after election day. Nearly 1,000 ballots were invalidated after they were found packaged together in mailboxes — indicating illegal collection and ballot harvesting.
- Voter fraud: The Wall Street Journal recently highlighted a problem in Washington, a state that instituted a vote-by-mail program nearly a decade ago. The article featured one resident who had moved from Washington to Texas yet received his Washington ballot in the mail – at his new Texas address. Nothing would prevent him or others from voting with their mail-in ballot as well as in-person at their current residence.

A copy of the case is available here: <https://libertyjusticecenter.org/media/illinois-vote-by-mail>

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The Liberty Justice Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public-interest litigation center that represents clients at no charge and was founded to fight against political privilege. The most recent example of the Liberty Justice Center's national success in this arena is its 2018 U.S. Supreme Court victory in *Janus v. AFSCME*. Beyond its work in the *Janus* case, the Liberty Justice Center's team of talented, liberty-minded attorneys also fight to protect economic liberty, private property rights, free speech, school choice and other fundamental rights. The Liberty Justice Center pursues its goals through strategic, precedent-setting litigation to revitalize constitutional restraints on government power and protections for individual rights. Learn more about the Liberty Justice Center at LibertyJusticeCenter.org.