



January 7, 2022

Via email to:

Del. Barbara Evans Fleischauer
Del. Evan Hansen
Del. Joe Statler
Del. Danielle Walker
Del. John Williams

Sen. Bob Beach
Sen. Mike Caputo

Dear Monongalia County Legislator:

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization. As part of our nonpartisan, civic mission, we advocate for methods to increase voter turnout; support legislation to modernize election methods, reduce taxpayer costs, and reduce administrative burden; and oppose restrictions on voter registration or voting. We hold to these principles regardless of the outcome of any election because the right to vote and equal access to the ballot are pillars of our democracy and of the League.

We are contacting all Legislators who represent Mon County to seek your support for legislation to be introduced in the 2022 session of the Legislature. This legislation will codify many of the lessons learned from the 2020 elections.

What Happened in 2020?

West Virginia conducted 2020 elections using novel methods enabled by the Governor's Emergency Orders. Those 2020 elections reflect what social scientists would call a "natural experiment," a situation where we can observe the actual outcome of a policy change that would not otherwise have happened.

In 2020, every eligible voter was granted access to an absentee ballot, a major departure from current WV law. The effect of that unexpected policy change was stunning in terms of voter acceptance. Mon County alone saw a 20-fold increase in absentee ballots over 2018 and a 12-fold increase over 2016. Statewide, voter turnout reached historic levels.

Where Do We Go in 2022?

The Governor's Pandemic Emergency Orders have been rescinded, and the election methods that proved so successful in 2020 have no basis in current law. Yet, the pandemic emergency and the need for novel election methods have not abated, and 2022 elections will be upon us shortly.

More than nine thousand Mon County voters participated in the 2020 General Election by absentee ballot. We urge you to support legislation forthcoming in the 2022 session of the Legislature to make this a permanent option, one that can be implemented in time for the 2022 Primary.

The League of Women Voters of Morgantown/Monongalia County thanks you for your service.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SAB", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sarah Barnes
President, League of Women Voters of Morgantown/Monongalia County