VOTE BY MAIL – DON'T BE DETERRED

[Note: On Tuesday, following my draft of this white paper, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy announced that his changes to USPS services will be suspended until after the election. DeJoy's statement, however, is ambiguous, and insufficient. He has not stated whether he will restore sorting machines that have been removed or decommissioned, or return mailboxes to their locations. Whatever good comes from his office in the coming days and weeks leading up to November 3, my position below still stands as the safest way to protect your right to vote.]

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democratic republic – essential to our freedom, and to the principle that, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, ours is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Any student of American history will tell you that would-be tyrants have attacked universal suffrage continuously, by one means or another, since our nation's founding. Here is a partial list:

- Women could not vote in national elections until 1920.
- Jim Crow tactics such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and worse, including murder, have a long and sordid history.
- Jim Crow lives today through such naked mechanisms as proof-of-identity laws, the corrupt manipulation and closing of polling places in minority neighborhoods and, here in Florida, the legislature's kneecapping of Amendment Four.

The latest attempt to squash our right to vote comes straight out of Washington, D.C., where Donald Trump unashamedly is trying to destroy voting by mail. His purpose, in his own words, is to suppress voting by his opposition. Trump's scorched-earth effort includes starving and dismantling the United States Postal Service, one of the nation's oldest and most popular institutions. The USPS dates back to 1775, when Benjamin Franklin was appointed our first Postmaster General, and the institution is explicitly included in Article 1, Section 8 of the US Constitution.

Let's be clear: voting by mail is both popular and safe. Trump, himself, and the First Lady, vote by mail. Yet, Trump attacks it relentlessly with bald-faced lies, and

by abusing the powers of his office. His newly appointed Postmaster General – a millionaire Trump supporter – has upended USPS operations so that all mail (not just ballots) is needlessly delayed. He eliminated overtime at a time when the USPS workforce is greatly reduced due to the coronavirus, and ordered the destruction of critical sorting machines, the result of which is to further inhibit mail delivery. He even went so far as to order the removal of mailboxes!

TRUMP WILL NOT STOP. WE KNOW THIS.
BUT WE WON'T SUBMIT TO THE PETTY, TYRANNICAL ACTIONS OF A FRIGHTENED MAN.

You can still vote by mail. Safely. Your mail-in ballot will be counted on November 3 – if you do a few, simple things.

1. Order your ballot early! Don't wait until the last minute. Order it today. Here's the link to request your ballot: https://www.votepinellas.com/VoteByMail or you can request one by email at MailBallotRequests@VotePinellas.com

2. Mail your ballot early! Don't wait until the last minute. **Mail it no later than seven days before the election.** Under normal circumstances, your ballot would arrive at the Supervisor of Elections office within two or three days of mailing. Since these are not normal conditions, give yourself that extra four-day cushion.

   You can check to make sure your ballot was received and approved by clicking here: https://www.votepinellas.com/Mail-Ballots/Check-My-Mail-Ballot-Status or call (727) 464-VOTE (8683).

3. Use the ballot drop-off locations the Supervisor of Elections has spotted throughout the county. There are more than 20 locations throughout the county. You don't have to use one near your home. Any location will work. Click here for a list of drop-off locations:

https://www.votepinellas.com/Election-Information/Ballot-Drop-off-Locations

REMEMBER: THERE IS NO DROP-OFF ON ELECTION DAY.

The only exception is that you can drop off your ballot at any of the three Supervisor of Elections offices – **no later than 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.**

BUT, WHY WAIT? Do it early, and **your ballot will be counted.**

4. Speaking of early, you can always go to an early-voting polling place to cast your ballot. This isn't as simple as voting by mail, but it is an option. Here's what the Supervisor of Elections says about it:

   Statewide, early voting is currently held a minimum of the 10th day through the 3rd day prior to any federal, state or county election, with the Supervisor of Elections having the option to provide early voting on the 15th, 14th, 13th, 12th, 11th and 2nd days prior to the election. Times vary among counties, but must be no less than 8 hours and no more than 12 hours per day.

   ### Early Voting Locations:
   - *Supervisor of Elections Office: County Courthouse - 315 Court St., Room 117, Clearwater, 33756 (Voter parking spots will be designated in Courthouse parking lots)*
   - *Supervisor of Elections Office - Election Service Center - 13001 Starkey Rd., Starkey Lakes Corporate Ctr, Largo, 33773*
   - *Supervisor of Elections Office - County Building - 501 First Ave. N., St. Petersburg, 33701*

   Voters can go to any early voting site. In order to vote a regular ballot, voters are required to present both picture and signature identification. Voters who do not bring both types of ID will be required to vote a provisional ballot.

5. Finally, if you have a mail-in ballot, but decide you want to vote in person, take your mail ballot with you to your polling place. Poll workers will mark the mail ballot "cancelled," and you'll be allowed to vote a regular ballot

at the polling place. If you do not take your ballot to the polls, a poll worker will confirm that your ballot was NOT received before issuing a regular ballot to you. If elections staff cannot confirm that your ballot has NOT been received, you may vote a provisional ballot, and the canvassing board will later determine the validity of the ballot

Voting is your right! Vote on or before November 3. Don't let anything stand in your way!

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