



TERRI HOLLINGSWORTH
Pulaski County Circuit and County Clerk

July 2, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OPEN LETTER FROM PULASKI COUNTY CIRCUIT AND COUNTY CLERK
Clerk Terri Hollingsworth Requests Funding Support for County Clerks

(LITTLE ROCK, ARK.) – In preparation for the November 3, 2020 election, Pulaski County Circuit and County Clerk Terri Hollingsworth released an open letter and sent versions to Governor Asa Hutchinson and Secretary of State John Thurston. Clerk Hollingsworth is requesting that the secretary of state and governor provide necessary financial support to all 75 Arkansas counties to meet the needs of an unprecedented increase in absentee voting due to COVID-19 health safety concerns. The body of the open letter is below: (Copies of all three letters are also attached to this email.)

The November 3, 2020 election is 125 days from today. Early voting begins on October 19. As the Pulaski County Clerk and Voter Registrar, our office is working in preparation for that election.

Last week Arkansas Secretary of State John Thurston publicly recognized the concern many Arkansas voters have expressed about the safety of voting in person this fall considering the COVID-19 health crisis. I, too, am confident that current election law allows all registered voters in Arkansas to request and vote by absentee ballot in the November 3 election.

To ensure a smooth transition as county clerks pivot to meet a significant increase in absentee voting, we need greater assistance from the Secretary of State. We need the CARES Act funding and other resources to adequately equip all 75 Arkansas counties. An unavoidable uptick in voting by absentee ballot will take an undue toll on all county clerks' offices.

The governor has discussed absentee voting many times and through executive orders has granted no-excuse absentee for the run-off and special elections that have occurred throughout the state since our primary election in March. However, more action is needed.

The governor must emergency funds to adequately supplement the needs of all 75 counties to conduct a safe November election. Adequate means funding additional costs for postage, printing, processing, canvassing, and tabulating absentee requests and completed ballots. Promises of personal protective equipment are welcomed and needed, but we also need to prepare for the large numbers of Arkansas voters who choose the safe alternative of voting by absentee ballot.

A *FiveThirtyEight* survey of election officials from eight states and the District of Columbia showed a 30-93 percent change from 2016 in voting method from in-person to absentee. How would the voting method change here in Arkansas?

In Pulaski County over 251,000 Arkansans are registered to vote. If turnout trends continue, like they have for the past three Presidential elections, an estimated 160,000 or more will cast a ballot in November. We receive approximately 8,000 absentee ballot requests during an average general election which is less than 5 percent of the total votes. The cost associated with each ballot sent is approximately \$2.50 per mailing. If the number of absentee requests were to increase to 25 percent of the 160,000, we would be required to send out 40,000 absentee ballots.

More absentee ballots will also require more time to process and canvass those ballots before Election Day. So, I urge the governor to use his executive authority to extend ballot canvassing for the entire period of early voting and allow tabulation to begin the Friday before Election Day, October 30th.

If planned deliberately and funded as needed, my fellow county clerks, election officials and I can prepare and hold an adequate election in the middle of a health crisis while setting the standard for future elections.

Terri Hollingsworth, Pulaski County Circuit and County Clerk

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The Pulaski County Circuit and County Clerk's office has extended its temporary operations in accordance with County Judge Barry Hyde's executive order keeping all county offices closed to the public, including the Pulaski County Courthouse. The Clerk's office will continue to offer limited in-person services from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more details visit the website at www.pulaskiclerk.com. The county government is closed Friday, July 3, for the Independence Day holiday.

Pulaski County registered voters can complete, download, print, and sign an absentee application online at www.pulaskiclerk.com. For those without access to a printer or the internet, applications can be requested by calling (501) 340-8336 or emailing vrcr@pulaskiclerk.com. Absentee ballot applications sent via mail should be sent to:

Voter Registration Department
Pulaski County Circuit and County Clerk
401 West Markham Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Voters who do not live in Pulaski County, should contact their own county clerk. Click here for a list of county clerks.

At this time, applicants are encouraged to mail, fax, or email their absentee ballot requests. If submitting an absentee application in-person, please call the Voter Registration Department at (501) 340-8336 before coming to the office.

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To check voter registration, download forms or for additional questions, registered Arkansas voters are encouraged to visit <http://www.pulaskiclerk.com/en/services/voteregistration/>, call (501) 340-8336 or email vrcr@pulaskiclerk.com.

The Pulaski County Circuit and County Clerk is Terri Hollingsworth. Hollingsworth was sworn-in to office on January 1, 2019. Pulaski County is one of 18 counties that has combined the two clerk positions. As county clerk, Hollingsworth also serves as the Pulaski County Voter Registrar.

The clerk's staff processes all county voter registration applications, updates and transfers (for changes of address,) and maintains the county's voter registration data. The staff also receives and processes absentee ballot applications and distributes and receives absentee ballots.

The Pulaski County Election Commission manages the selection and administration of polling places, supervision of poll workers, and the counting of ballots. To apply to be a poll worker for the November 3 election, visit www.votepulaski.net.