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OPINION

Letter: Mail-in balloting ensures access to voting for all

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Allowing wider access to absentee voting in Michigan in our upcoming election will prevent the disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of voters.

That is the bottom line for providing voters with the option of voting an absentee ballot that can be mailed or dropped off at their local clerk's office. It will expand access and keep people safe during the COVID-19 pandemic if they choose not to head to the polls on Election Day. That is the point the Heritage Foundation misses in its article titled "[Michigan should not be encouraging mail-in balloting.](#)"

Expanding access to absentee voting is exactly what Michigan voters approved when they passed Proposal 3 by a 67% vote in 2018. The approved constitutional amendment expanded voting rights and increased access to the ballot including removing barriers to absentee voting, allowing all registered voters to cast an absentee ballot if they choose at any time during the 40 days prior to any election.



Amani Sawari, 31, drops off petitions in the mail at Lathrup Village Post Office to supporters for a ballot initiative to restore "good time" credits to the prison system for early release of prisoners. (Photo: Clarence Tabb Jr., The Detroit News)

The League of Women Voters supports the expansion of absentee voting because it removes barriers to voting and allows more citizens to participate in the democratic process.

Michigan has systems in place to deter and detect irregularities in the voting process, both by mail and in person. One of the other provisions of Proposal 3 strengthens the auditing process of our elections.

There is no record of massive or serious election manipulation via mail-in-voting. Even Fox News anchor Chris Wallace has attested to this.

A recent report by the Brookings Institute refutes claims about fraud made by the Heritage Foundation, finding the Foundation's data does not make a case for large-scale or even small-scale voter fraud across the country.

The Brookings Institute found the Heritage data showed “surprisingly little” voter fraud and “not nearly enough to justify blocking vote-by-mail systems in a pandemic.” The Heritage Foundation’s data found only 44 total cases of fraud in five states that allowed vote by mail before 2018. During the period those cases occurred nearly 50 million votes were cast. Forty-four cases among 50 million votes means fraud occurred just .00008% of the time.

Further, Americans want to be able to vote by mail, especially during a life-threatening pandemic. A poll released by the Pew Research Center this year showed almost three out of every four Americans favor universal access to mail voting.

Beyond COVID-19, voting by mail protects voters who, for whatever reason, are not able to make it to their polling place, including people with disabilities or illness.

The expansion of absentee voting aligns with the League of Women Voters’ mission to empower voters and defend democracy for every Michigan voter. It is imperative we continue seeking ways to make voting as accessible as possible for every eligible voter, not more difficult. We must ensure no registered voter is excluded from our upcoming August and November elections and beyond.

That’s what Michigan voters approved, and that’s what they deserve.

Christina Schlitt, president of the League of Women Voters of Michigan