



NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

KAREN BRINSON BELL
Executive Director

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TO: Members of the General Assembly
FROM: Karen Brinson Bell, Executive Director
RE: CARES Act Grant Update
DATE: April 29, 2020

I write to provide you with updated information regarding our CARES Act request of April 22, 2020, and to urgently request that the General Assembly adopt legislation to match the federal funds to ensure our elections this year are safe and accessible to every voter.

Yesterday, we were informed that the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) has identified additional CARES Act funds for re-allocation to the states. As a larger state, based on the population-based formula for allocation of funds, North Carolina's grant has been amended to add an additional \$49,844 to the previously identified funds. This will require an additional \$9,969 in matching funds from the state.

We are therefore requesting state funding of \$2,130,466 to receive the \$10,947,139 in federal funds awarded to North Carolina. We will need these funds to conduct the June 23 Republican Second Primary in Congressional District 11, with in-person voting beginning on June 4, 2020. With the heightened demand for supplies and anticipated supply-chain shortages across the country, we cannot wait until the next fiscal year to receive these funds.

As explained in my [April 22, 2020 letter](#), most CARES Act funds would directly assist county boards of elections in purchasing supplies to conduct elections for over 7 million registered North Carolina voters this year, including for example:

- One-time-use pens and styluses for each voter, and sanitization of reusable supplies
- Hand sanitizer and masks for voters, poll workers, and election staff
- Social distancing tools and protective devices such as face shields, stanchions and plexiglass shields at check-in stations
- Facility rental fees to assist counties in moving to sites large enough to accommodate social distancing, including former department stores or grocery stores, if available
- Facility cleaning fees before, during, and after the election
- Cost of additional absentee-by-mail envelopes and other supplies
- Remote training of election officials, including training on proper hygiene and sanitation practices during a pandemic

The current version of Senate Bill 704 explicitly does not provide a state match and there is not currently filed legislation in the House that addresses CARES Act funding for elections. Without these funds, voters who go to the polls for the second primary in June or the general election November may find that they there is not enough hand sanitizer, that they must reuse dirty pens and styluses, and that elections officials do not have personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and protective shields to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Voters may find that many polling places are closed because funds were not allocated to provide for sufficient cleaning and supplies to keep them open.

Many of you have heard from your bipartisan county boards of elections supporting the need for a state match. See [April 27, 2020 letter](#). Most of the CARES Act funds would go directly to the counties to support their efforts to keep voters safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19. This will allow voters to exercise their fundamental right to vote whether they choose to vote in person or by mail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Brinson Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Brinson Bell
Executive Director
State Board of Elections