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Chicago Election Board facing 'monumental obstacles'; governor says election will not be delayed

By Craig Wall

Sunday, March 15, 2020

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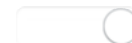
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COVID-19 will not delay Ill. election

Election Day in Illinois is just two days away and state leaders say it will go on as planned, despite concerns over how polling places are being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fears about the COVID-19 virus continue to wreak havoc though, with election judges bailing and polling places opting out. That is prompting a renewed push to get as many

people as possible to take advantage of early voting.

Chicago election officials say because of COVID-19 concerns they are facing monumental obstacles in preparing for Tuesday's primary.

"Since Wednesday we have lost 168 Election Day polling precinct places, these owners have told us they no longer want a polling place in their location," said Marisel Hernandez, Chairwoman Chicago Board of Elections.

Hundreds of judges have also quit. They are often older, putting them in the population most vulnerable to the virus.

Today the governor made it clear Illinois' primary will go on as planned, despite two other states delaying theirs.

"If we delayed the election it is unclear when we might be able to hold another one," Governor JB Pritzker said. "Democracy must continue, we have to elect leaders even in less than ideal circumstances none of these decisions I come to lightly."

The mayor said they will have a strike force available to help with polling place issues on Tuesday. The Board of Elections has set up online training videos as it seeks to prepare more judges and the city, county and state are helping to recruit people.

"We've had hundreds of additional people who have responded, they're in the course of going through on line training so we believe that we will have a sufficient number of election judges to staff the polling places on Election Day," said Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

So far 124-thousand people have early voted and a record breaking 118-thousand more have applied to vote by mail.

"We broke the World War II record for vote by mail applications," election chairwoman Hernandez said.

Chicago has already surpassed its previous primary election record for early voting with 145,905 through Sunday, with one more day of early voting to go on Monday.

Early voting continues at 51 sites around the city Monday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Six of the early voting sites, at the Loop Super Site at Clark & Lake, the King Center, Welles Park, Mt Greenwood Park, the West Side Learning Center and Roden Library will remain open through 7 p.m.

Chicago election officials are urging everyone to check their website to make sure they get the latest information on where they should go to vote.

A list of polling places is [available here](#).

For voters planning to cast a ballot on Election Day, the Chicago Election Board recommends submitting their voter information here: <https://www.chicagoelections.gov/en/your-voter-information.html>.

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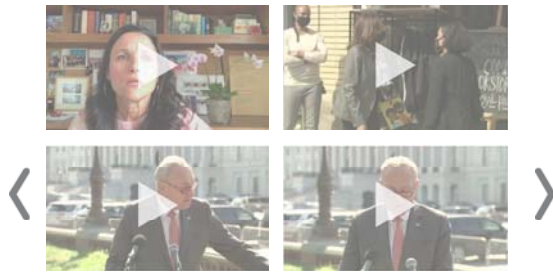
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