



Doris "Granny D" Haddock

THE EQUAL VOICE

A newsletter for those who walk the talk of campaign finance reform



**Open
Democracy**
AN EQUAL VOICE FOR ALL



**Open
Democracy
Action**

**NH
Rebellion**

May 2020

Executive Director's Message

Covid-19 Exposed Weaknesses in New Hampshire's Democracy

In a meeting this week between a new State of New Hampshire committee advising the Secretary of State on Covid-19 election preparations, town and city clerks raised questions about how Granite Staters would be able to vote safely in this fall's Sept. 8 state primary and Nov. 3 general elections.

The committee, called the *Select Committee on Emergency Election Support*, has met four times in the last two weeks and it's clear that it is, indeed, an emergency. Some polling places are too small to accommodate more than a fraction of voting booths. Same-day voter registration will cause long lines, and poll workers will have to touch hundreds or even thousands of documents. Potentially, hundreds of thousands of voters could be *disenfranchised out of fear* or so much red tape that they give up. So far, the State's response has been with bailing twine and duct tape, when what's needed is comprehensive reform.



Open Democracy and Open Democracy Action have been fighting for these reforms for two decades, but year after year, the bills are killed or vetoed. Too expensive, they said. Too much fraud, they claimed. Just last year, bills calling for no-excuse absentee balloting and online voter registration were vetoed or killed. Had we implemented these basic reforms, voting during Covid-19 might not have been the full-blown emergency it's turned out to be.

So what are we going to do about it? We can, and should, support our traditional in-person voting. But with our aging population, we should also implement an expanded absentee /vote by mail option. We should, immediately, install an online system to register to vote, like 40 other states have. Currently, NH is the ONLY U.S. state that requires in-person voter registration only, without a mail-in or online option. For our citizens' sake, we must do better.

As you read this, our Regional Democracy Teams around the state are writing letters and emails to the Emergency Election Support committee, to the Secretary of State and to their local newspapers. We've held weekly briefings for those teams on the crisis, and what actions to take. If you don't have the time to be part of a team, help support us financially. And at the very least, support us by sharing our social media, signing our petitions, and talking with your friends in the community.

Olivia

Olivia Zink, Executive Director

Start right now by doing this 2-minute action! [Sign the Protect Our Election Petition](#), then **SHARE it with your friends.**

Contact Us!

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ODA: [OpenDemocracyAction.org](https://www.OpenDemocracyAction.org) [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#),

NH Rebellion: [NHRebellion.org](https://www.NHRebellion.org) [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)

Haven't joined us yet? Visit and share our [Join pages](#)

Status of Open Democracy Events & Operations

Open Democracy Offices

Outside of picking up some materials, we've spent little time in the office in the last six weeks. Please contact us on our cell phones or email us: [Olivia Zink](#), 603-661-8621; [Brian Beihl](#), 603-620-8300; [Doreen Demarais](#), 603-608-6211.

Regional Democracy Team Meetings & Action Cafes

All ODA Regional Democracy Teams are meeting via Zoom, focusing on absentee ballot voting and registration issues. Since last month, three dozen new people have joined us in our Zoom briefings, and scores of actions have been taken, writing to the Secretary of State, Governor, Attorney General and the new Emergency Election Support committee.

Summer Walks Still Under Consideration – For Now

In the last week, we started to discuss whether the summer walks like the Granny D Memorial Walk and the Seacoast Walk for Independence from Big Money were still a possibility. One way we can do it is do individual walks in our community for a set distance, and have you take a picture of yourself doing it. Then we'll make a big photo collage and send it to our State Reps and Senators. Tell us what you think at FightBigMoney@OpenDemocracyNH.com.

Annual Meeting

Great news! We are going forward with our annual meeting on June 10, 6:00, featuring David Daley, author of the new book highly recommended by Nancy MacLean, "Unrigged: How Americans are Battling Back to Save Democracy." See a more detailed article at the end of the newsletter.

"Democracy in Action" Conference a Success, Despite Shift from In-Person to Online

Not only did 93 people sign up for the Democracy in Action Conference, but the entire event was conducted online and recorded for future use by our volunteers. We are so grateful to all of our speakers, especially to Gerri King and Steve Scudder, who did our live sessions on April 4th. If you didn't have a chance to attend, here is the complete list of handouts and links to the videos on our YouTube Channel.

Keynote & April 4 Workshops:

[Managing Teams](#) - Gerri King, Ph.D

[Volunteer Recruitment & Management](#) - Steve Scudder

[The Art of Facilitation](#) - Gerri King, Ph.D

Prerecorded Workshops:

[How Public Funding of Elections Works](#) - Olivia Zink, Adam Eichen & Nick Nyhart

[Untangling Gerrymandering & Redistricting](#) - Olivia Zink, Lucas Myer, Kyri Claflin. Liz Tentarelli and Henry Klementowicz

[What every organizer must know to build power & Move Members to Action](#) - Isaac Grimm, Louise Spencer, Arnie Alpert & Olivia Zink

[Digital Organizing - Using tech to organize people to do extraordinary things](#) - Manuela Ekowo & Spencer Olson, Rethink Media

Handouts: All of the handouts, slide presentations and resources can be found [HERE](#).

Olivia Zink Interviewed by The Guardian

Executive Director Olivia Zink was interviewed by the international news outlet, The Guardian in early April, resulting in [this story](#) about how new voters might get shut out of the fall elections unless action is taken soon.

Meet Sara Lobdell!!

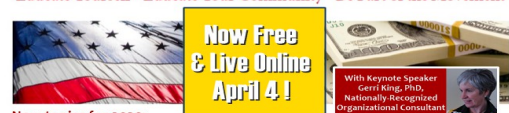


Sara will be interning with OD/ODA this summer as she works toward her masters from Antioch New England. As an Organizing Fellow, she'll be primarily working with our Regional Democracy teams on the west side of the state. She took an environmental advocacy course recently and was inspired to see if organizing for a cause was a good fit for her future.

Please make her feel welcome!

Democracy in Action

Educate Yourself * Educate Your Community * Be Part of the Movement



New topics for 2020:

Equipping Teams, Organizers & Activists for Success

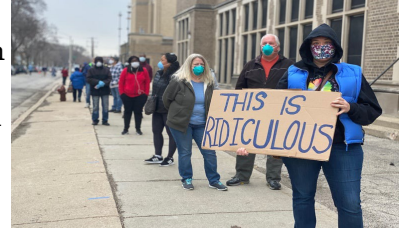
- Team Development & Leadership
- Fundamentals of Organizing for Power
- Understanding Democracy Reform Issues

Special Report

Fall 2020 NH Voting in Crisis Due to Covid-19

Open Democracy & ODA Rushing to Prevent Disenfranchising of Thousands

In mid March, when it began to sink in that voting would be affected by Covid-19, Open Democracy, Open Democracy Action and its allies in the NH Campaign for Voting Rights began to consider what steps to take. After Wisconsin's disastrous April 7 presidential primary, fighting money in politics would mean nothing if hundreds of thousands of Granite Staters could not vote for fear of their health. Officials report 67 tested positive after the WI primary.

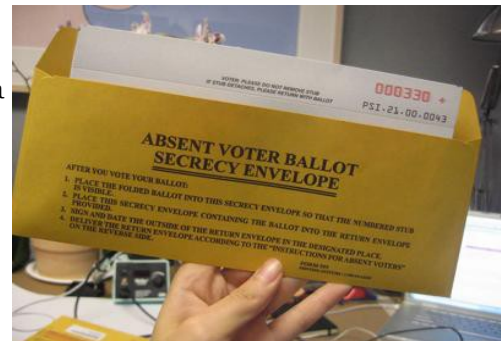


Contacting the Secretary of State & Governor

Open Democracy Action immediately printed and mailed [reports from the Brennan Center](#) to the Secretary and Dept. Secretary of State which showed comparisons of New Hampshire's preparedness (vote-by-mail relative to other states, and recommendations on how states, counties and municipalities should be preparing for voting Covid 19. We also asked our Regional Democracy Teams and our friends at the Kent Street Coalition to [write postcards to Governor Chris Sununu and Secretary of State William Gardner](#), asking for no-excuse absentee voting. New Hampshire has one of the most restricting policies in the country for both absentee ballots and for registering to vote by absentee. The SOS and Governor were sent scores of letters and postcards, asking for this accommodation.

Bending the Rules on NH's Absentee Ballots

On April 9, Governor Chris Sununu, citing the flexibility of New Hampshire's election rules, announced at a press conference that he would allow those voters with a fear of Covid 19 to use the absentee ballot. On April 10th, SOS Garner and Attorney General Gordon McDonald issued a [joint memorandum](#) confirming the Governor's statement. Instead of suspending the four excuses for voting absentee with his emergency powers, just the physical disability rule was bent through 2020.



However, this guidance neglected to mention how citizens could register to vote, change a voter registration, or change a party affiliation. Clerks offices around the state are largely closed, and while some clerks are doing one-on-one appointments, the lack of an online voter registration system has put many

communities in violation of Part 1, Article 11 of the NH Constitution guaranteeing accessible voter registration.

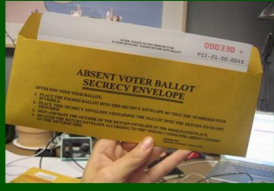
MEMO

TO: NH Secretary of State
FROM: New Hampshire Voters
SUBJECT: Expanded Absentee Ballots

Today, the U.S. topped the world in the number of positive coronavirus cases.

It's time to stop opposing expanded voting by absentee ballot & online registration.

#SafeVoting #LetNHVote



When asked by the press how people could register with clerks' offices closed, the Secretary of State indicated that if you claimed a disability to vote by absentee, you could also register to vote using fear of Covid 19 as an excuse. To date, this comment has not been addressed in official guidance, resulting in some clerks not doing voter registration until clear guidance is issued.

Special Report, continued

\$3.2 Million in CARES Covid 19 Funding and \$15 Million in HAVA Federal Funds

It was not clear in mid April whether or not the NH Secretary of State had applied for funding earmarked for assisting with elections under the first CARES Covid 19 relief package. New Hampshire's portion of this funding is \$3.2 million, but requires an 20% match from the state. Open Democracy Action and the NH Coalition for Voting Rights was afraid the SOS would be "pennywise and pound foolish" and not take this money because of the necessary match, and mobilized letters to the SOS to urge him to accept the grant and find the match. The SOS did in fact apply for this money, but in April that action had not been disclosed.



This money can be used to prepare polling places for Covid 19 voting, print additional mail ballots and envelopes, subsidize extra postage, hire extra poll workers, and help finance a public information campaign. It can't be used for state-only or local elections.

Another pot of money, a previous grant from the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) provided money for improving and hardening the state's voting infrastructure, but the State chose not to spend the money outright, and has been spending interest-only from the funds for small projects. HAVA money can't be used as the match for the CARES money, and it must be proportionally used among the towns. Had this money been used for such infrastructure projects as online voter registration and vote-by-mail infrastructure, our state would have been dramatically better prepared.

Open Democracy Creates "How to Vote by Absentee Ballot in New Hampshire," Plans Public Service Announcement Campaign

The Secretary of State's office isn't known for a voter-friendly website. Technically, the information is there, but in numerous places. Likewise, as we've talked to clerks and supervisors of the checklist in the last few weeks that simple, clear, timely information hasn't been getting to them, either. Add to this situation one of the most complicated processes for absentee voting and absentee voter registration, and you have a recipe for a barrier to voting.

In response to this void, Open Democracy has now created a page aptly called "[How to Vote by Absentee Ballot in New Hampshire](#)". This guide will help voters navigate through the special Covid 19 rules for voting by absentee, but also includes regular rules.

Developing an idea from one of our Central NH Regional Team members, Janet Ward, Open Democracy has created a radio [public service announcement](#) to distribute, and is working on a PDF handout that can be distributed, as well as a video announcement.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
Application for State Election Absentee Ballot-RSA 657:4
Absentee due to Religious Observance and Disability
(Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Outside the U.S. use the federal post card application)
<http://www.sos.nh.gov/Elections/absentee>

I. I hereby declare that (check one):
☐ I am a duly qualified voter who is currently registered to vote in this town/ward.
☐ I am absent from the town/city where I am domiciled and will be until after the next election, or I am unable to register in person due to a disability, and request that the forms necessary for absentee voter registration be sent to me with the absentee ballot.
☐ I plan to be absent on the day of the election from the city, town, or unincorporated place where I am domiciled.

II. I will be entitled to vote by absentee ballot because (check one):
☐ I am requesting a ballot for the presidential primary election and I may be absent on the day of the election from the city, town, or unincorporated place where I am domiciled, but the date of the election has not been announced. I understand that I may only make such a request 14 days after the filing period for candidates has closed, and that if I will not be absent on the date of the election I am not eligible to vote by absentee ballot.
☐ I cannot appear in public on election day because of observance of a religious commitment.
☐ I am unable to vote in person due to a disability. **If voting safely from Covid 19**
☐ I cannot appear at any time during polling hours at my polling place because of an employment obligation. For the purposes of this application, the term "employment" shall include the care of children and infirm adults, with or without compensation.
☐ For use only on the Monday immediately prior to the election: I cannot appear at my polling place on election day because the National Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning, blizzard warning, or ice storm warning for election day applicable to my city, town, or unincorporated place and either (check one):
☐ I am elderly or infirm or I have a physical disability, and would otherwise vote in person but I have concerns for my safety traveling in the storm.
☐ I anticipate that school, child care, or adult care will be canceled, and would otherwise vote in person but will need to care for children or infirm adults.

Any person who votes or attempts to vote using an absentee ballot who is not entitled to vote by absentee ballot shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, RSA 657:24

III. I am requesting an official absentee ballot for the following election (check only one):
☐ *Required for Primary Elections: I am a member of, or I am now declaring my affiliation with a party and I am requesting a ballot for that party's primary (check only one):
☐ *Presidential Primary Election to be held on _____
☐ Democratic Party ☐ Republican Party
☐ *State Primary Election to be held on September 8, 2020.
☒ **Separate Applications Required for Sept 7 & Nov 3**
☐ Democratic Party ☐ Republican Party
☐ State General Election to be held on November 3, 2020

Turn Over - You Must Complete the back side
Page 1 of 2

SOS Appoints "Select Committee on 2020 Emergency Election Support"

On April 24th, Secretary of State William Gardner announced that he had appointed a six-member "[Select Committee on 2020 Emergency Election Support](#)" to study and make recommendations to the Secretary of State on what should be done to prepare the state for elections and how \$3.2 Million in CARES money should be spent. As of this writing, four meetings have been held, with an additional six meetings scheduled in the next two weeks. Brad Cook, who participates in Open Democracy's Advisory Committee and chairs the NH Ballot Law Commission, was named chair of the new committee, made up of three Democrats and three Republicans.

Special Report, continued

Prior to the first meeting, Open Democracy Action submitted a [memo to the committee](#) outlining some of the issues in executing the state's elections. Some of our issues were brought forward in the first meeting, and Executive Director Olivia Zink will make a short presentation this Tuesday, May 12 as a stakeholder organization.

The committee is heeding calls for swift action. Important deadlines on June 1 for the posting the Sept. primary polling places, and June 2 for changing party affiliation are rapidly approaching.

If you're interested in listening in to the committee's Zoom calls, visit the [SOS website](#) for more information.

Open Democracy Action Mobilizes Regional Democracy Teams to Protect the Vote

Our [Regional Democracy Teams](#), which had all meetings canceled in March, began holding weekly briefings via Zoom with Open Democracy Action staff in mid April, and mobilizing members to write letters, postcards and emails. Initially, they contacted the Secretary of State and Governor [asking them to take action and allow for no-excuse absentee](#). We then asked them to contact their clerks, who to that point had not received guidance from the Secretary of State, nor had they been informed of the potential of a portion of the \$3.2 million in aid.



With the Emergency Election Commission now operational, our members have had productive conversations with the members of the committee, sharing their recommendations. We have already discussed their role in the education of their communities on the use of absentee ballots and disseminating the the public service information we're preparing.

While there may not be urgency from the Secretary of State, members of the Regional Democracy Teams know what's at stake and are already doing their part to help their fellow Granite Staters.

To Guarantee that Every Voter Can Vote Without Jeopardizing Their Health, We'll Need Your Help Throughout the Summer & Fall

Our teams are working hard, but we'll need all hands on deck before the first ballot is cast on September 8. Here are some of the ways you can help us:



- [Join a Regional Democracy Team](#) and [write letters and take actions](#) to make our state officials accountable.
- [Write letters to the editor](#).
- Help us distribute "[How to Vote by Absentee Ballot in NH](#)" posters and literature.
- Use your social media to communicate to your community to [inform voters about voting absentee](#).
- Speak with groups to which you belong: Churches, fraternal and business groups, and distribute our literature to them about absentee ballots.
- Share the [Protect Elections petition](#) via social media and by email.

Contact Dep. Director [Brian Beihl](#) 603-620-8300 to find out how you can help!

2020 Open Democracy and Open Democracy Annual Meetings

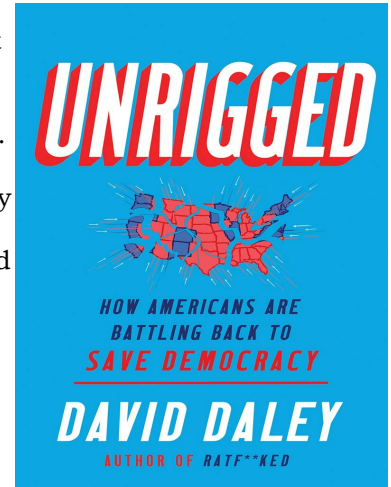


No cookout or potluck this year, but we have some really great news that was just confirmed before press time. On June 10, 6 p.m., David Daley, former editor of *Salon* and a journalist rightly acclaimed for his 2016 book about the ruthless REDMAP redistricting project, [Ratf**ked: Why Your Vote Doesn't Count](#), has agreed to speak with us via Zoom about his brand new book, “Unrigged: How Americans are Battling Back to Save Democracy.”

With stirring examples from around the country, he explains how citizens have fought back against the Koch-backed right’s attempts to shackle democracy and WON -- at exactly the time such efforts to rig the rules and suppress the vote are surging toward us again.

The stories he tells of grassroots victories are uplifting and inspiring. They show how it can be done. And they provide the road map that we need right now, as we head into a perilous fall election season that will demand more of us than ever before.

We're thrilled to have David with us for the evening, and we hope you'll join us! All Open Democracy supporters are welcome to participate, not just board members. Details will be sent out shortly on how to register.



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