

“Social justice should be the underlying goal of all humanity.”

-Alan V. Lowenstein, Institute Founder



NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE  
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

June 19, 2020

Dear \_\_\_ County Board of Elections:

We write to express our deep concern about the choice of police stations for vote-by-mail dropboxes in your county, specifically the [location(s) with police station]. Connecting voting and law enforcement is a bad idea at any time. But particularly in light of the current climate and the growing awareness of matters of racism around policing, locating the dropboxes at these locations could create a significant deterrent to voting, especially for Black communities. It is imperative that all New Jersey voters, regardless of their race, feel comfortable exercising their right to vote. We strongly urge you to change the locations of these dropboxes.

We understand the difficult situation you are in as election officials this year. COVID-19 has been devastating for our state, and the vast responsibility of ensuring that our democracy thrives is on your shoulders. We also understand that Executive Order 144, issued by Governor Murphy on May 15, 2020, provided a framework but left ultimate decisions about locations up to you. As you are aware, the Division of Elections has recently provided guidance asking that counties not put ballot drop boxes in front of police stations, if other options are available, in light of the current climate. We urge you to follow this guidance and place ballot drop box locations in more appropriate areas. Fire stations and other municipal buildings would be ideal locations.

Police stations are unsuitable for the needs of residents of your county. As a federal judge in the District of New Jersey stated regarding voter intimidation: “Some voters—especially in minority districts where the legacy of racism and history of clashes between the population and authorities has given rise to a suspicion of police and other officials—may choose to refrain from voting.”<sup>1</sup> Courts have recognized that stationing police officers outside polling places is a “familiar form of voter intimidation.”<sup>2</sup> This is doing the opposite to a potentially similar effect. While a ballot drop box is not a polling place, it is essential that drop boxes are located in places where all voters will feel comfortable with casting their ballots and that all voting locations are equally accessible for all voters.

We ask that you change these locations as soon as possible to reduce voting deterrence and concern. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and to provide any assistance in finding alternative locations.

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**do social justice.**

Respectfully,

American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey  
American Friends Service Committee Prison Watch  
Blue Wave NJ  
Clean Water Action  
CoLab  
Faith in New Jersey  
League of Women Voters of New Jersey  
NAACP New Jersey State Conference  
NeighborCorps  
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NJ Working Families  
New Brunswick Area NAACP  
New Jersey Appleseed Public Interest Law Center  
New Jersey Citizen Action  
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice  
New Jersey League of Conservation Voters  
New Jersey Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-NJ)  
Salvation and Social Justice  
South Jersey Women for Progressive Change  
Women Who Never Give Up, Inc.

Cc: The Honorable Tahesha Way, New Jersey Secretary of State  
The Honorable [name] County Clerk  
Justin Dews, Senior Counsel at Office of Governor Phil Murphy

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<sup>1</sup> *Democratic Nat. Comm. v. Republican Nat. Comm.*, 671 F. Supp. 2d 575, 612 (D.N.J. 2009), *aff'd*, 673 F.3d 192 (3d Cir. 2012).

<sup>2</sup> *Shelby Cty. v. Holder*, 811 F. Supp. 2d 424, 486–87 (D.D.C. 2011), *rev'd on other grounds*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013).