



# Consumer Voice: Democracy During Coronavirus

## Volume 3: Issue 1

### Register to Vote by Art Rios Sr.

Voter registration is more important than ever in 2020. This November, voters will elect national and local leaders who will make important policy decisions on access to health care, a livable minimum wage and affordable housing.

It is vital for consumers to stay engaged in voter registration efforts and educate everyone on candidates' positions on these important issues. Face-to-face voter engagement is typically considered to be the most effective method of bringing consumers into the democratic process, and we need to find ways to do that amongst COVID-19 restrictions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the organizations that typically register voters are closed, such as state departments of motor vehicles, and in many states, field-based registration drives are on hold. Nonetheless, given the importance of the November elections, eligible voters must be registered well ahead of Election Day.

One way to do this while maintaining social distancing is to encourage people to register to vote online or by mail. All states allow voters to register by mail. 40 states, plus D.C., currently allow online voter registration. In most states, online registration will work only for people that have a driver's license or a state-issued ID. Others will still need paper forms. There are a number of organizations that can help you find your specific state's requirements and options for online or mail registration and voting.

Beyond voter registration, we must also advocate for accessible options for voting during COVID-19. Consumer Advisory Boards (CABs) can help educate consumers on your state's requirements for mail or online voting. It is likely that online registration and mail-in ballots will rise in importance as we move towards the election. All consumers should be aware of how to register and vote remotely.

For more information, visit [www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org), which contains links and resources for conducting remote voter registration drives and voter education campaigns. Other excellent resources can be found at [rockthevote.org](http://rockthevote.org) or [vote.org](http://vote.org).



#### Inside This Issue

PG. 2 Ensure our Right to Vote during a Pandemic by Katherine Cavanaugh, Consumer Advocate

PG. 3 Ensure you are Counted in the Census by Keith Belton

PG. 4 CAB SPOTLIGHT-National Consumer Advisory Board



## Ensure Our Right to Vote during a Pandemic

by Katherine Cavanaugh

The Coronavirus has changed many aspects of our daily life; however, it has not changed the fact that we have an important election in November. While we are working to prevent and treat the spread of the Coronavirus, we must also ensure everyone is able to get to know their candidates, and vote in their state primaries and the general election.

Due to the Coronavirus, the national conventions have been delayed (the Democratic Convention will be August 17-20; the Republican Convention will be August 24 – 27), which allowed [many primary elections dates to be pushed back](#).

In addition, many states have shifted their primaries to mail ballots (Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, West Virginia), while others are encouraging the use of absentee voting (Delaware, Indiana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands).

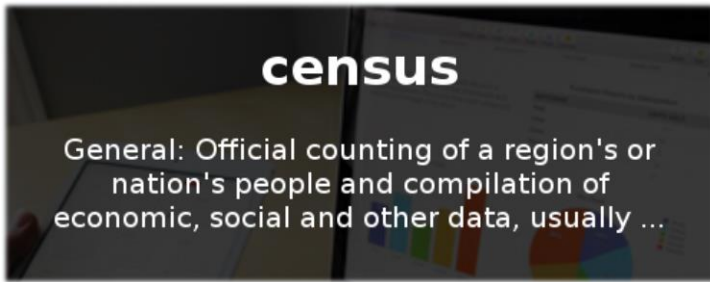
These changes will hopefully allow more individuals to participate in the election process via mail; however, individuals who receive their mail from a service provider need to figure out how to receive their ballot.

After the [Supreme Court decision blocking an extension for absentee ballots in Wisconsin](#), many questions have been raised about how the right to vote will be respected in primaries and the general election. States are developing plans to ensure access to voting and ensure voting integrity, including determining how to get ballots to voters. COVID has added difficulties of gathering supplies while vendors are delayed, and determining how to increase ballot-scanning capacity while staffers may be teleworking.

To ensure accessible voting in the general election, Congress has floated a number of ideas, and [Senators Klobuchar and Wyden have introduced a bill to expand voting by mail](#). However, it is not clear when this issue will be discussed or addressed.

**Reach out to your representative and tell them you want voter access addressed in the next Coronavirus package.**





## Ensure You are Counted in the Census

by Keith Belton

**Census data will determine political representation and how almost \$7 billion in federal funding will be distributed to the states.**

These federal funds support all types of government services such as health, infrastructure, and social welfare (i.e. funding for medical assistance and SNAP or where to put new schools and parks).

It is critical to ensure that all populations, especially marginalized populations, are counted so they receive the representation and funds that they need.

In Chicago, the Night Ministry partnered with One Northside to reach out to vulnerable folks to let them know about the importance of the census and ensure everyone is counted.

I picked up that responsibility and attended a three-day training on the census, learning how to do door knocking and how to talk to people about the census. In January, we began knocking on doors and holding community events.

When the Coronavirus hit, we had to figure out how to pivot tactics to ensure people were still counted. We are now phone banking to make sure everyone is counted by Halloween (the extended deadline).



**Continue to share your voice and let us know your thoughts on the Consumer Voice Newsletter. Please take time to review previous issues and complete a [5 question survey](#) on the Consumer Voice by Friday June 19.**

- [Spring 2018](#)
- [Spring 2019](#)

[Winter 2018](#)  
[Fall 2019](#)

[Winter 2019](#)

# CAB Spotlight by David Perry



SUCCESS IS THE SUM OF ALL SMALL EFFORTS, REPEATED DAY IN AND DAY OUT.  
Robert Collier

***In each issue of the Consumer Voice, the CAB Spotlight selects and features a CAB from around the nation. However, we dedicate this section to showing how CABs nationwide may meet the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.***

The National Consumer Advisory Board believes that during the coronavirus pandemic, it is more important than ever for CABs to meet and assist their health centers to disseminate health information to all consumers. CAB meetings can also provide a forum to help health centers to understand their consumers' needs and how they may be complying with social distancing efforts and other health and safety guidelines.

Several CABs around the country are using conferencing technology to overcome the challenges of social distancing through "virtual meetings." For instance, the Houston Health Care for the Homeless clinic recently held their CAB meeting with the help of the Zoom videoconferencing application.

"The Zoom app was very user friendly and allowed us to discuss all the items on the agenda," says CAB Member Charlotte Garner.



Charlotte shared that their CAB "discussed how the health center offers COVID testing, quarantine measures for the homeless and how our CAB could assist the clinic during the pandemic." Camillus Health Concern (CHC) CAB in Miami used a telephone conference line hosted by the clinic for their April and May meetings. "We emailed and texted everyone a 'dial-in' number and we went through our entire agenda within an hour," says CAB Member Elving Caraballo.

In its most recent virtual meeting, seven CHC CAB members and staff dialed in and discussed the location of meals, toilets and showers for people experiencing homelessness.

[NCAB has issued guidelines and suggestions on how CABs can effectively conduct virtual meetings](#) using videoconferencing applications. In addition to Zoom, applications like Hangouts and Skype offer good videoconferencing options (though Zoom works even without video). The guidelines also note that many cable and telephone carriers offer free or reduced-price internet connections.

It is important to hold meetings at the regularly scheduled times and maintain lines of communication between consumers and staff to ensure maximum participation.

The guidelines also suggest beginning meetings with "wellness checks" in which every participant can express how they are dealing with issues raised by the pandemic. Virtual meetings, whether by video or conference call, are an excellent way in which CABs can continue to further their mission during this unusual and stressful period.

NCAB remains available to provide technical assistance to any CAB that has questions on how to set up and conduct a virtual meeting.



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Regional Rep. 5&7: Keith Belton  
Regional Rep. 6&8: Charlotte Gardner  
Regional Rep. 9&10: Sandra Delarosa