

## Fontes' Emergency Mail Ballot Plan Thwarted by Political, Legal Maneuvering

**PHOENIX** - The Attorney General today successfully maneuvered a court procedure to stop Recorder Adrian Fontes' effort to expand voting options.

Fontes was set to mail ballots today to voters who are not on the Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL) but eligible for the Democratic Presidential Preference Election on March 17. The goal of the mailed ballot distribution plan was to allow access to voting while cutting down on the need for the public and election workers to interact and touch equipment in polling places, potentially exposing them to the COVID-19.

The temporary restraining order stopped Fontes from putting the printed ballots, which had been coordinated for delivery with U.S.P.S. and were ready to mail, on the trucks to the post office.

Earlier today, Fontes said in a press release, *"We are in uncharted territory with the COVID-19. My first concern is to protect the health of the voters and staff who work in the polling places while maintaining the integrity of the election. Anything we can do to minimize human interaction in the polling place is what we must to do."*

Fontes' plan was to mail-out ballots, giving voters the option to just drop-off the voted mail ballot at a voting location without going into the polling place or engaging with other voters and staff in order to vote. This would have allowed voters to keep to "social distancing" protocols recommended by health officials and still have the opportunity to cast a ballot. It also would have helped alleviate potential lines and voter access issues as the number of locations available for polling places continues to decline due to COVID-19 concerns.

"There is a national health emergency. It is time for decisive leadership. My goal is to give voters every option available to vote and still protect public health but it seems that some politicians are more interested in splitting hairs over legal issues and playing politics," Fontes said.

"Some have accused me of 'going rogue' – well, if going rouge means helping voters and keeping them safe during a public health emergency, then I guess I am," Fontes said, in explanation of his decision to send out the ballots under an emergency action, despite not having explicit authority under statute to do so. Fontes argued that state law does not specifically prohibit him from sending the ballots.

"In times of emergency, leaders need to step-up and take care of the public. My public is the voters. I am very disappointed that politicians who don't share this priority were successful in stopping my effort. But, we have an election to run. I am committed now to working with and supporting the Board to run the smoothest Election Day possible," Fontes said.

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors announced today that they would be reducing the number of voting locations on Election Day due to cancellations by polling place locations and election worker staff. There is also a lack of cleaning supplies available to meet County Health Department directives for preventing the potential spread of disease in the polling places.

The Presidential Preference Election is Tuesday, March 17.

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Contact: Kathren Coleman  
[kcoleman@risc.maricopa.gov](mailto:kcoleman@risc.maricopa.gov)  
480.438.0919  
[Maricopa.Vote](#)