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## Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

1309 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515–6157 (202) 225–2061 https://cha.house.gov

July 22, 2020

RODNEY DAVIS, ILLINOIS RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

MARK WALKER, NORTH CAROLINA BARRY LOUDERMILK, GEORGIA

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

JEN DAULBY, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

Claire Woodall-Vogg Executive Director Milwaukee Election Commission City Hall 200 East Wells Street Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Ms. Woodall-Vogg,

As Ranking Member of the Committee on House Administration in the U.S. House of Representatives, which has broad jurisdiction over election issues, I write to you because of the election administration issues that plagued your city's April 7th primary election. As primary elections conclude across the country, I have identified the city of Milwaukee as one where voters are likely to face significant hurdles voting in the November 3rd general election and where the risk of failure is simply too high. Included in this letter are references to the issues identified as well as oversight questions aimed at reassuring me and, more importantly, the voters of Milwaukee that they will not be disenfranchised again.

- a. Closure of in-person voting locations: In the 2018 general election, the City of Milwaukee had 180 polling locations serving a voting population of nearly 300,000 people. In 2020, however, the Milwaukee Election Commission ("Commission") cut this number from 180 to just five polling places. This shift led to widely reported accounts of long lines and 71 voters testing positive for Covid-19.
  - The Presidential Commission on Election Administration has said voters should not have to wait more than 30 minutes. How does your office plan on reducing the time voters spend in line on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020?
  - 2. Does any effort by your office to reduce wait times include the opening of additional polling locations?
  - 3. What plans does your office have in place to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers, and voters in both early voting and on election day?
  - 4. In March of this year over \$400 million was appropriated to states for the purpose of combating Covid-19 at the ballot box. Wisconsin received over \$7 million of that appropriation, has that money made its way to the City of Milwaukee?
    - a. If not, has your office been in contact with the Wisconsin Elections Commission, Milwaukee County, or the state legislature regarding the status of that money?

- b. If it has, how much did the city of Milwaukee receive, and how has the city used that money, or how will the city use this money, to combat Covid-19 at the ballot hox?
- 5. How did the Commission arrive at the decision to only open five polling places?
- 6. The previous executive director of the Milwaukee Election Commission has indicated that it took an "extraordinary number" of people to conduct the election. Please provide the Committee with a breakdown of the number of staff deployed, where they were deployed, and what their assigned duties were.
- 7. Did the Commission rely on the Governor's executive order to postpone the election, even though he had previously indicated that he lacked the authority to do so?
- b. Lack of adequate poll worker assistance: Poll workers are essential to efficient administration of elections. In the midst of a pandemic, they serve on the "front lines" to uphold our democracy. Unfortunately, the pandemic has decreased the number of available poll workers because, traditionally, many poll workers are members of at-risk populations, such as those 60 years-old and above. To aid in the effort to recruit replacement poll workers, the Wisconsin National Guard deployed 2,400 troops to assist at polling places. However, reports indicate that Milwaukee utilized only 170 of these troops.
  - 1. What were the Commission's efforts to recruit and train poll workers prior to the Covid-19 pandemic?
  - 2. How did these efforts shift as Covid-19's spread became more of a threat to the number of poll workers?
  - 3. Please describe the coordination between the city of Milwaukee, the county of Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Elections Commission, and the Wisconsin National Guard regarding poll workers ahead of the Wisconsin primary?
    - i. How will this coordination be improved ahead of the November general election?
  - 4. Do you plan on utilizing additional National Guard troops for the general election?
  - 5. What training did Wisconsin National Guard troops receive ahead of the primary election?
    - i. Will that training be increased ahead of the general election?
- c. Staffing crisis: It is my understanding that you were only recently confirmed as the Executive Director of the Milwaukee Election Commission. During your confirmation process allegations surfaced that have raised questions on the integrity of the hiring process. You have also indicated that, "The advice give[n] to [you] over the past week has been to be less transparent and honest in order to be appointed by [the] Council and to survive this City's political landscape." Further, at one point in the hiring process you withdrew your application, to only later withdraw your withdrawal. I hope it is apparent why the Committee, in light of the issues faced in the city of Milwaukee's primary election, would be concerned about the leadership of the Election Commission.
  - Please use this as an opportunity to reassure the Committee that the hiring process for the
    position of Executive Director for the Milwaukee Election Commission was fair and
    open.

- 2. Please use this as an opportunity to reassure the Committee of your honesty and transparency with respect to serving as Executive Director of the Milwaukee Election Commission.
- 3. Please outline any directional changes within the office you hope to implement ahead of the November general election.

Ahead of the 2020 general election it is imperative that the city of Milwaukee address these problems to ensure voters are again not disenfranchised. I firmly believe every voter who wants to vote must have the opportunity to do so. It is also critical that the American people have confidence in their elections, and, to this end, the issues seen in the city of Milwaukee are simply unacceptable. It is my hope that these oversight questions will begin to restore that confidence. Please submit answers to these questions to the Committee by August 14, 2020. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at the Committee on House Administration at (202) 225-8281.

Sincerely,

Rodney/Davis

Ranking Member