

WAYNE JENNESS

CITY COUNCIL ✓ DISTRICT 4

July 6, 2021

Wayne Jenness
Candidate, Lowell City Council, District 4
PO Box 8947
Lowell, MA 01853

Sen. Edward Kennedy, Reps. Vanna Howard, Thomas Golden and Rady Mom
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Senator Kennedy, Representatives Howard, Golden and Mom:

Tonight, the Lowell City Council voted unanimously to forward a home rule petition to the State Legislature. This petition would allow Lowell to extend some of the pandemic-related voting accommodations that were used last year to great effect. These provisions include early voting, drop boxes, and vote by mail. Having these tools would greatly expand ballot access for Lowell voters as we face an extremely important and transformational election this Fall.

With the change to a hybrid system of elections for both City Council and School Committee seats, combined with the lack of census data to allow for the crucial redistricting process, Lowell is likely going to only have 8 voting locations for this election. Some voters in District 4 (the District I am running in) will likely need to cross the Merrimack River to get to their polling location at Lowell High School. Without the ability for early voting, drop boxes, and vote by mail, I fear that many voters across the city will be disenfranchised by this change due to disability, lack of access to transportation, competing demands for time and other reasons. Part of the goal of the change in election system was to increase voter engagement and turnout; not having access to these crucial tools that were successfully used in past elections would significantly hamper Lowell's ability to meet that goal.

One of the bigger hurdles of this election will be educating the voters about these changes. I believe that all the candidates and their campaign teams and volunteers have a vital role to play in educating voters. Candidates, staff and volunteers will be directly engaging voters on a near constant basis between now and the election. It is incumbent on us to do the work of educating all voters on how their ballot can be cast in the most convenient way for them. Voters cannot be properly educated about these changes without knowing exactly what the election is going to look like.

For these reasons, I humbly ask as a candidate, and as a constituent, that this home rule petition be introduced to the legislature and acted on as quickly as possible, so that we can begin the important work of educating Lowell's voters.

Respectfully,

Wayne Jenness

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Cc: Lowell Sun