

20-534

The Secretary presents his compliments to their Excellencies and Messieurs and Mesdames the Chiefs of Mission and wishes to refer their attentions to the topic of foreign government elections and absentee voting via polling stations in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department requests each respective Embassy conducting an absentee voting process provide its assurance that the process will be conducted with due respect for the sovereignty and public order of the United States, including respect for national and local policies and guidelines concerning COVID-19. The Department notes that respect for such policies and guidelines is critical during this time of national public health emergency. In view of the increasing number of states and localities that have or may soon enact local movement restrictions (such as “stay at home” orders), the Department strongly recommends that the Embassy consider establishing remote voting procedures for its citizens residing in the United States, in order to ensure maximum participation in the election process.

**DIPLOMATIC NOTE**

Further, the Department requests that each Embassy re-engage with relevant property management personnel and other concerned parties concerning its intent to proceed with any previously scheduled voting process. To the extent that a number of the designated polling places are owned or controlled by private parties, the Department notes that many such entities in the United States have recently established their own building access rules due to the public health emergency, and that the use of such spaces as polling stations may no longer be compatible with such rules.

Additional questions concerning the impact of COVID-19 precautions on Embassy and consulate operations within the United States may be addressed to [OFM-EmergencyMgt@state.gov](mailto:OFM-EmergencyMgt@state.gov) via electronic mail.

Department of State,



Washington, March 26, 2020.