

No. 20-3139

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IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

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JAMES CARSON and ERIC LUCERO,

*Plaintiffs–Appellants,*

v.

STEVE SIMON, in his official capacity as Minnesota Secretary of State,

*Defendant–Appellee,*

and

ROBERT LAROSE, TERESA MAPLES, MARY SANSOM, GARY  
SEVERSON, and MINNESOTA ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED  
AMERICANS EDUCATION FUND

*Intervenor-Defendants–Appellees*

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On Appeal from the United States District Court  
For the District of Minnesota, No. 0:20-cv-02030-NEB-TNL  
The Honorable Nancy E. Brasel

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**Emergency Motion for Injunction Pending Appeal  
and Expedited Consideration**

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## Introduction

Pursuant to Rule 8, Appellants James Carson and Eric Lucero move for a provisional injunction of the Minnesota Secretary of State's actions altering the voting deadline for the presidential election. Exercising its power under Article II's Electors Clause, the Minnesota Legislature prescribed that mail-in votes must be received at polling places by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. But the Secretary has announced that ballots may be received for up to a *week* after that deadline and may even be *mailed* after Election Day so long as no affirmative evidence proves the actual mailing date. This policy violates the Electors Clause and federal law establishing a single nationwide Election Day. If not enjoined now, the Secretary's actions threaten the disenfranchisement, through post-election challenges, of thousands of voters whose ballots are received after Election Day.

The district court did not address these infirmities because it reached the remarkable conclusion that Appellants—Minnesota voters and candidates for elector—lack Article III and prudential standing. It held that only Congress has power to assert preemption arguments, that candidates for office lack standing to challenge the rules governing *their own elections*, and that “vote dilution is a paradigmatic generalized grievance that cannot support standing.” Exhibit A, Order 21. Its decision contravenes decades of precedent.

Prompt action is necessary. Early voting is ongoing, and voters need to know what rules will govern their votes. The Court should enter an injunction pending appeal and expedite this motion and appeal.<sup>1</sup>

## BACKGROUND

A. Article II of the Constitution establishes state and federal roles in enacting the laws governing presidential elections. The Electors Clause defines states' role as: "appoint[ing] in such Manner as the *Legislature* thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress." Article II, § 1, cl. 2 (emphasis added). The Election Day Clause provides that "Congress may determine the Time of chusing the Electors, and the Day on which they shall give their Votes; which Day shall be the same throughout the United States." Article II, § 1, cl. 4.

Congress set Election Day "on the Tuesday next after the first Monday in November, in every fourth year...." 3 U.S.C. § 1. This "mandates holding all elections for...the presidency on a single day throughout the Union." *Foster v. Love*, 522 U.S. 67, 69–70 (1997), which is November 3 this year. Congress set the time for electors appointed in each state to meet and vote, which is December 14. 3 U.S.C. § 7. And Congress provided a statutory safe harbor to allow states to ensure recognition of their elector appointments. 3 U.S.C. § 5. To qualify, a

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<sup>1</sup> Appellants moved the district court for an injunction pending appeal and requested a ruling rule by noon, Thursday, October 15. ECF 61. As of this filing, the district court has not ruled. Given the exigencies of this matter and the need for timely review, Appellants are now moving in this Court and will update the Court if and when the district court rules.

state must have “provided, by laws enacted prior to the day fixed for the appointment of electors,” a means of determining “any controversy or contest concerning the appointment of” electors, and must have completed the process “at least six days before the time fixed for the meeting of the electors,” 3 U.S.C. § 5, which is December 8.

The Minnesota Legislature exercised its authority by assigning its electors to the presidential candidate who receives the “highest number of votes” statewide. Minn. Stat. § 208.05. Following federal law, it set the election for the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November. Minn. Stat. § 204D.03 Subd. 2. Voters may vote in person, *id.* § 204B.16, and those who do must arrive at polling places before 8:00 p.m. *Id.* § 204C.05. Minnesota law also authorizes in-person absentee voting “during the 46 days before the election,” *id.* § 203B.081, and mail voting, *id.* §§ 203B.04, 203B.08. Minnesota law mandates that absentee ballots not be counted if they arrive at polling places on Election Day “either (1) after 3:00 p.m., if delivered in person; or (2) after 8:00 p.m.” *Id.* § 203B.08 subd. 3.

B. In May 2020, a group of Minnesota voters and an organization (“State Plaintiffs”) sued the Secretary in state court, challenging *inter alia* the Election Day receipt requirements applicable to mail-in absentee ballots. ECF 14, Foix Decl. Ex. A. The Secretary struck a deal with the State Plaintiffs providing that, “[f]or the November General Election [Secretary Simon] shall not enforce the Election Day Receipt Deadline for mail-in ballots, as set out in Minn. Stat. §§ 203B.08 subd. 3, 204B.45, and 204B.46 and Minn. R. 8210.2220

subp. 1, and 8210.3000, that ballots be received by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day...” Exhibit B, Consent Decree. The Secretary agreed to “issue guidance instructing all relevant local election officials to count all mail-in ballots in the November General Election that are otherwise validly cast and postmarked on or before Election Day but received by 8 p.m. within 5 business days of Election Day (i.e., seven calendar days, or one week).” *Id.* at VI.D. The agreement also provides that, when “a ballot does not bear a postmark date, the election official reviewing the ballot should presume that it was mailed on or before Election Day unless the preponderance of the evidence demonstrates it was mailed after Election Day.” *Id.*

The Secretary and the State Plaintiffs presented the agreement to the state court as a consent decree. The court entered it, determining that the Secretary’s choice to agree to extend the ballot-receipt deadline was “reasonable.” Foix Ex. A at 21. It did not assess the deadline’s constitutionality.

C. Appellants James Carson and Eric Lucero are Minnesota voters and presidential elector candidates. They filed this action on September 22, 2020, claiming (1) that the Secretary’s extension of the ballot-receipt deadline conflicts with Article II’s delegation of authority to “the Legislature” of Minnesota and (2) that this extension is preempted by the federal statute setting Election Day on November 3. They moved for a preliminary injunction. ECF Nos. 12–16.

The State Plaintiffs intervened, and they and the Secretary contended that Appellants lack Article III and prudential standing, are bound by the consent-decree order due to intervention of various Republican Party entities in the state

litigation, brought this case too late to impact the November 3 election, and identified no violation of federal law. The Court held a hearing and, on October 12, denied the injunction motion on the grounds that Appellants lack Article III and prudential standing.

## **ARGUMENT**

The injunction-pending-appeal standard is identical to the preliminary-injunction standard. *Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC v. Adams*, 151 F.3d 763, 764 (8th Cir. 1998). The “issuance of a preliminary injunction depends upon a ‘flexible’ consideration of (1) the threat of irreparable harm to the moving party; (2) balancing this harm with any injury an injunction would inflict on other interested parties; (3) the probability that the moving party would succeed on the merits; and (4) the effect on the public interest.” *Minn. Citizens Concerned for Life, Inc. v. Swanson*, 692 F.3d 864, 870 (8th Cir. 2012).

### **I. This Appeal Is Likely To Succeed**

#### **A. The Merits**

The Secretary’s actions violate the Electors Clause and are preempted by federal law setting the Election Day.

#### **1. The Secretary’s Actions Violate the Electors Clause**

The Secretary’s decision to count ballots received after the statutory Election Day deadline violates the Electors Clause, which vests the power to determine the “manner” of selecting electors exclusively in the “Legislature” of each state. The Secretary has no authority to override the Minnesota Legislature’s determination.

a. The Electors Clause confers on state legislatures a share of *federal* lawmaking authority. “[I]n the case of a law enacted by a state legislature applicable not only to elections to state offices, but also to the selection of Presidential electors, the legislature is not acting solely under the authority given it by the people of the State, but by virtue of a direct grant of authority made under Art. II, § 1, cl. 2, of the United States Constitution.” *Bush v. Palm Beach Cty. Canvassing Bd.*, 531 U.S. 70, 73–74 (2000). This provision “convey[s] the broadest power of determination” and “leaves it to the legislature *exclusively* to define the method” of appointment of electors. *McPherson*, 146 U.S. at 27 (emphasis added). Accordingly, only the Minnesota Legislature, not the Secretary, may establish regulations governing the presidential election, and the Secretary’s attempt to override the Legislature’s regulations is invalid.

b. The Secretary’s contention that the statutory deadline may conflict with the Minnesota Constitution is irrelevant. Because “[t]his power is conferred upon the legislatures of the States by the Constitution of the United States,” it “cannot be taken from them or modified” even by “their State constitutions.” *McPherson*, 146 U.S. at 27; *see also Palm Beach*, 531 U.S. at 76–77 (vacating state-court injunction on that basis).

c. Nor did the Minnesota Legislature authorize the Secretary’s actions. The Secretary and State Plaintiffs relied below on Minnesota Statutes § 204B.47, which authorizes the Secretary “adopt alternative election procedures” only “[w]hen a provision of the Minnesota Election Law cannot be implemented as a result of an order of a state or federal court....” But this clause



cannot authorize the overriding of *legislative* control over election regulation. See *Palm Beach*, 531 U.S. at 110–11 (rejecting reliance on similar statute conferring power on state courts in favor of clearly expressed legislative intent). Nor does it. First, Section 204B.47 assumes a valid exercise of judicial authority, and, as described, a conflict between federally-authorized election laws and a state constitution must be resolved in favor of the federally-authorized laws. Second, it is not the case that the receipt deadline “cannot be implemented as a *result*” of a state-court order. Instead, the *Secretary* decided that the deadline should not be implemented and asked a state court to rubberstamp that determination. Had the Secretary not requested this, the Legislature’s deadline would stand.

## **2. The Secretary’s Actions Are Preempted by Federal Law**

Congress exercised its constitutional authority to establish November 3 as the *sole* day for choosing electors, 3 U.S.C. § 1. This provision “mandates holding all elections for...the presidency on a single day throughout the Union.” *Foster*, 522 U.S. at 69–70. It preempts the Secretary’s policy of counting votes received *seven days* after Election Day in two respects.

First, the Secretary’s policy changes Election Day. The term “the election” in the federal statute “plainly refer[s] to the combined actions of voters *and officials* meant to make a final selection of an officeholder.” *Foster*, 522 U.S. at 71 (emphasis added). That is what makes Election Day, unlike other days, the “consummation” of the voting process. *Voting Integrity Project, Inc. v. Keisling*, 259 F.3d 1169, 1175 (9th Cir. 2001); see also *Millsaps v. Thompson*, 259 F.3d 535, 547 (6th Cir. 2001) (holding that this “combined action...to make a final selection”

must occur on Election Day); *Lamone v. Capozzi*, 912 A. 2d 674, 692 (Md. 2006) (“the ‘combined actions’ must occur, [and] voting must end, on federal election day”). Yet, under the Secretary’s policy, election officials will not even have all the ballots, and the election will not be consummated, until a full week after the federal Election Day. This conflicts with federal law and is preempted.

Second, the Secretary’s policy goes further by permitting voters to mail ballots after the federal Election Day so long as they are received before November 10 and do not affirmatively evidence their late mailing. The Secretary calls this a mere “presumption,” but there is no circumstance under which election officials could ever have a basis to suspect that an un-postmarked ballot received on (say) November 8 was mailed after Election Day. This is no hypothetical scenario: ballots may be “stuck together and one is cancelled out while the other is not,” ECF 39, Khanna Decl. Ex. 19 ¶ 6, and *Gallagher v. New York State Board of Elections*, 2020 WL 4496849 (SDNY Aug. 3, 2020), found that thousands of mail-in ballots in New York went un-postmarked in a single recent election. At a minimum, the Secretary’s policy of counting ballots both mailed and received after Election Day violates federal law.

## **B. Article III Standing**

Appellants’ standing as voters and candidates is well established by governing precedent.

### **1. Candidate Standing**

Appellants have standing as candidates for the office of elector. *See* Minn. Stat. § 208.03 (providing for the election of “Presidential electors”). As

candidates, Appellants have a direct and personal stake in the conduct of their election consistent with governing federal law—in particular, Article II’s Presidential Electors Clause. Practically every major case enforcing the Electors Clause has been brought by candidates. That includes *McPherson v. Blacker*, 146 U.S. 1 (1892), a pre-election suit by elector candidates challenging a state’s manner of appointing electors as inconsistent with the Electors Clause. More recently, the Supreme Court adjudicated similar claims by candidates in *Palm Beach*, 531 U.S. at 76, and then *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98, 103 (2000) (hereinafter “*Bush*”). As in those latter cases, Appellants will be injured by the tallying of votes in violation of federal law.

The district court’s dismissal of this basis of standing was wrong. It first concluded that *McPherson*—one of the leading Article II precedents—was wrongly decided or upended by subsequent doctrinal developments. Order 31-32. It then proceeded to acknowledge that Appellants’ claims are appropriate for consideration in “post-election litigation with tangible, concrete harms”—as in the *Bush* litigation—but drew a distinction with this *pre*-election challenge. Order 32. But this contention—which concerns ripeness, not standing—does not identify a material difference between this case and *Bush* respecting ripeness or standing.

First, Candidate Gore in that litigation contended that the vote totals “included illegal votes and omitted legal votes,” Order 33, but it was as true there as here that there was “no reason to infer, much less conclude, that the challenged...ballots would tend to favor one candidate or the other,” Order 33

n.20. That is because candidates in election contests must litigate over the rules *first* and *then* accept the results that follow from them. Gore could not have proven that the votes he wanted counted were for him and that those he did not want counted were for Candidate Bush.

Candidates are obligated to raise challenges like Appellants' before ostensibly unlawful ballots are counted and may not wait to determine whether they like those votes. Appellants are unaware of any case holding that candidates lack standing to challenge the validity under law of yet-to-be-counted ballots cast in their own election; such challenges are, of course, routine.

Second, the Court's order erroneously assumes that standing was only relevant in the *Bush* litigation insofar as Gore sought the jurisdiction of the lower courts. Order 32–34. But Article III's standing requirements applied equally to Bush's invocation of the Supreme Court's jurisdiction. *See Va. House of Delegates v. Bethune-Hill*, 139 S. Ct. 1945, 1951 (2019). Bush could not have proved that the position he took would have prevented a “diminished likelihood” winning, as the court below required. Order 33. For all Bush could prove, he might have won the race under Gore's proposed rules or vice-versa.

Third, the injuries to electors from an unlawfully conducted election are obvious and acute. A vote tally that is unlawfully derived is subject to challenge, litigation, and overruling in courts or before contest adjudicators. All candidates are therefore injured by an unlawfully conducted race. The court below disagreed, but only because it assumed the *merits* of Appellants' claims against them, concluding that the Secretary has “provided” “certainty” through his

seven-day extension policy, that “the Electors are in danger of creating confusion rather avoiding it,” and that the “record is replete with information provided to Minnesota voters about the Postmark Deadline.” Order 24–26.

This was yet another error. The policies the court identified as *curing* uncertainty are the *cause* of uncertainty because they are unlawful. “The Supreme Court has made clear that when considering whether a plaintiff has Article III standing, a federal court must assume *arguendo* the merits of his or her legal claim.” *Parker v. District of Columbia*, 478 F.3d 370, 377 (D.C. Cir. 2007), *aff’d District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570 (2008); *Warth v. Seldin*, 422 U.S. 490, 502 (1975). The district court was obligated to assume that the Secretary’s challenged actions are invalid, which would necessarily threaten the election’s validity. *See also infra* § I.B.3. And there is no basis to conclude that Appellants lack standing under that assumption.

## **2. Voter Standing**

Appellants have standing as voters facing the dilution of their votes by ballots cast and counted in violation of federal law. “The right to vote is individual and personal in nature, and voters who allege facts showing disadvantage to themselves as individuals have standing to sue to remedy that disadvantage.” *Gill v. Whitford*, 138 S. Ct. 1916, 1920 (2018) (quotation marks and citations omitted). The Secretary’s actions require counting ballots that federal law holds to be ineligible, and that will necessarily dilute Appellants’ lawfully cast votes.

a. Since at least *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186 (1962), the Supreme Court has recognized that plausible allegations of vote dilution confer standing. *Id.* at 207–09. “A citizen’s right to a vote free of arbitrary impairment by state action has been judicially recognized as a right secured by the Constitution, when such impairment resulted from dilution by a false tally, or by a refusal to count votes from arbitrarily selected precincts, or by a *stuffing of the ballot box*.” *Id.* at 208 (citations omitted) (emphasis added). The Court’s landmark decision *Reynolds v. Sims* recognized the same. 377 U.S. 533, 555 (1964) (“The right to vote can neither be denied outright, nor destroyed by alteration of ballots, nor diluted by ballot-box stuffing.” (citations omitted)).

Standing in these cases is “premised on the understanding that the injuries giving rise to those claims were ‘individual and personal in nature.’” *Gill v. Whitford*, 138 S. Ct. 1916, 1930 (2018) (quoting *Reynolds*, 377 U.S. at 561). It does not follow that vote dilution inflicted on many individuals is insufficiently particularized to confer standing. “The fact that other citizens or groups of citizens might make the same complaint...does not lessen [the] asserted injury.” *Pub. Citizen v. U.S. Dep’t of Justice*, 491 U.S. 440, 449–50 (1989). Indeed, the D.C. Circuit upheld voters’ standing to challenge a congressional rule change that diluted the votes of *all voters in all states*. *Michel v. Anderson*, 14 F.3d 623, 626 (D.C. Cir. 1994). “That all voters in the states suffer this injury, along with the appellants, does not make it an ‘abstract’ one.” *Id.*

b. The court below, however, held that “vote dilution is a paradigmatic generalized grievance that cannot support standing.” Order 21.

First, that conflicts with *Baker, Reynolds, Mitchell*, and too many other decisions to cite and would, if upheld, call into question any individual voter's right to challenge dilution. The district court's citation of several recent cases alleging vote dilution through the potential for future voter fraud conflates the theoretical possibility of fraud in those cases with the *certainty* here that ballots will be counted in alleged violation of federal law. Order 22. While the claim that a state is not adequately enforcing laws like those against vote-fraud is a classic generalized grievance, a challenge to an unlawful policy that directly impairs an individual's voting rights through dilution is anything but that. Indeed, the district court found that "tens of thousands" of ballots are likely to arrive late. Order 11. The Secretary intends to count them and thereby dilute Appellants' votes by markedly increasing the pool of votes counted. That injury is concrete.

Second, the ruling below is incorrect that this dilution "is a generalized grievance" because it "affect[s] all Minnesota voters in the same way." Order 23. Setting aside that sheer numerosity is irrelevant, *see Michel, supra*, the premise is wrong. Those whose votes are received after the statutory deadline *benefit* from the Secretary's policy at the expense of those whose votes are timely: only the latter suffer dilution. This is no different from districting schemes that over-populate and under-populate districts, injuring only those in over-populated districts, whose standing to sue is well-established. *See Baker*, 369 U.S. at 207–08.

### 3. Statewide Disenfranchisement

Finally, the Secretary's actions jeopardize Minnesota's participation in the Electoral College and Appellants' ability to serve as electors, injuring them as both voters and elector candidates. The Secretary's attempt to override the Legislature violates the "safe harbor" provision of 3 U.S.C. § 5 because it is not a "*law[] enacted* prior to the day fixed for the appointment of the electors." This injury arises by operation of law: if the Secretary's actions are invalid—as Appellants allege—then Minnesota will be ineligible for the safe harbor. It was to avoid *that precise result* that the Supreme Court terminated Florida's 2000 recount, and Appellants' interest here as candidates is identical. *Bush*, 531 U.S. at 110.

The district court's standing analysis was confused and, at best, improperly assumed the merits of this argument fail. It recognized that Minnesota could forfeit its safe-harbor protection if it were to "change the procedures it uses to appoint electors after Election Day," Order 27, but found Appellants' position "speculative," on the view that Minnesota has not yet changed procedures "after Election Day," Order 28 n.15. But the problem is that the Secretary's actions violate the safe harbor because they depart from the "laws enacted" by the Minnesota Legislature. 3 U.S.C. § 5. The court was bound to assume, for standing purposes, that this theory is correct, and so was bound to accept for standing purposes that Minnesota's safe-harbor status will be forfeited.



The court also found that loss of safe-harbor status would not necessarily prove fatal to Minnesota’s electors voting in the Electoral College, Order 29, but safe-harbor status is a substantial state benefit that exists to eliminate risk. *See Palm Beach*, 531 U.S. at 77–78. Standing is triggered not only where harm is certain or consummated but also where there “is increased risk” of a harm. *Mo. Coal. for Env’t v. F.E.R.C.*, 544 F.3d 955, 957 (8th Cir. 2008); *Sutton v. St. Jude Med. S.C., Inc.*, 419 F.3d 568, 573–74 (6th Cir. 2005) (“The courts have long recognized that an increased risk of harm...is an injury-in-fact.”). The automatic loss of safe-harbor status marks the dramatic increased risk that Minnesota’s electors will not be recognized. The district court’s contrary conclusion effectively treats the safe harbor as a non-factor in presidential elections, but that was not the Supreme Court’s view in *Bush*, which regarded the loss of safe-harbor status as sufficiently injurious to require terminating a recount. 531 U.S. at 110.

### **C. Prudential Standing**

The district court also found that Appellants lack prudential standing on the basis that their preemption claim asserts the rights of Congress and their Electors Clause claim asserts the rights of the Minnesota Legislature. But Appellants are asserting their own interests, and no third-party standing issue is even implicated.

A plaintiff claiming that he has been injured state action that conflicts with federal law does not “assert claims of injury that...Congress suffered.” Order 34. If that were true, only Congress would have standing to assert preemption. That

is not the law. *See, e.g., Springfield Television, Inc. v. City of Springfield, Mo.*, 462 F.2d 21, 23 (8th Cir. 1972) (finding that television franchisor had standing to assert preemption under FEC regulations).

Equally untenable is the district court's ruling that Appellants, as voters and electors, lack prudential standing to litigate the constitutionality of state law under Article II. In addition to the preemption point, which applies equally to Appellants' Article II claim, it is well established that "private parties can litigate the constitutionality or validity of state statutes, with or without the state's participation, so long as each party has a sufficient personal stake in the outcome of the controversy...." *Cherry Hill Vineyards, LLC v. Lilly*, 553 F.3d 423, 430 (6th Cir. 2008); *see, e.g., Bryant v. Yellen*, 447 U.S. 352, 367–68 (1980). Again, this is not a matter of asserting the rights of others, like the Minnesota legislature, but of asserting *Appellants' own interests* as voters and candidates.

Moreover, the Electors Clause and Election Day Clause of Article II are among the Constitution's federalism provisions that serve to "protect[] the liberty of all persons within a State by ensuring that laws enacted in excess of delegated governmental power cannot direct or control their actions." *Bond v. United States*, 564 U.S. 211, 222 (2011). *Bond* held that individuals "can assert injury from governmental action taken in excess of the authority that federalism defines." *Id.* at 220. An individual's "rights in that regard do not belong to a State," *id.*, a point that carries the day equally under Article III and "prudential standing rules," *id.* at 225. That is so in this context: the aberrant prudential standing limitations the district court applied would have barred adjudication in

each of the Electors Clause cases discussed above, including *McPherson* and *Palm Beach*. See also *Foster*, 522 U.S. at 67 (voter challenge under Article I’s Elections Clause).

## II. The Equities Favor an Injunction

An injunction is essential to protect Appellants and all Minnesota voters from the irreparable harm caused by the Secretary’s unlawful actions.

A. As an initial matter, *Purcell v. Gonzalez*, 549 U.S. 1 (2006) (per curiam), which requires a federal court to entertain “considerations specific to election cases and its own institutional procedures” before issuing an injunction impacting election procedures, *id.* at 4–5, is not a bar to an injunction because those considerations favor an injunction here. The issue of which ballots are validly cast, can be, and often is, litigated *after* the election. See *Bush*, 531 U.S. at 106–11; *Bush v. Hillsborough Cty. Canvassing Bd.*, 123 F. Supp. 2d 1305 (N.D. Fla. 2000). This is not a case involving something like a redistricting plan, a voter-identification law, or the candidates included on the ballot. Challenges to those features of an election concern what happens *before* the election, but this challenge concerns what happens *after* it—i.e., which ballots will be counted. And it would be far better for voters to know *now* what the rules are then find out after they voted when their ballots may be disqualified.

B. Appellants will suffer irreparable harm absent an injunction. The Secretary has ordered votes cast in violation of Minnesota law to be counted, and the district court found that many votes will be cast after Election Day. Order 11. Vote dilution is irreparable harm. See *Bush*, 531 U.S. at 1047 (Scalia,

J., concurring in order issuing stay pending appeal) (the “counting of votes that are of questionable legality...threaten[s] irreparable harm”); *Montano v. Suffolk Cty. Legislature*, 268 F. Supp. 2d 243, 260 (E.D.N.Y. 2003); *Patino v. City of Pasadena*, 229 F. Supp. 3d 582, 590 (S.D. Tex. 2017); *Day v. Robinwood W. Cmty. Improvement Dist.*, 2009 WL 1161655, at \*3 (E.D. Mo. Apr. 29, 2009); *Democratic Nat’l Comm. v. Republican Nat’l Comm.*, 2016 WL 6584915, at \*17 (D.N.J. Nov. 5, 2016) (collecting cases). This imposes a special injury on Appellants, who are not only voters, but also candidates for office. *Burdick v. Takushi*, 504 U.S. 428, 438 (1992); *Bullock v. Carter*, 405 U.S. 134, 143 (1972).

In addition, the legal infirmity of the Secretary’s actions has created significant uncertainty about the rules governing the November election and whether *any* Minnesota citizens will have their votes counted. The policies the Secretary will implement in the November 3 election will not satisfy the safe harbor of 3 U.S.C. § 5 because they are not “laws enacted prior to the day fixed for the appointment of electors.” *See Bush*, 531 U.S. at 111. A further harm is that the Secretary’s election deadlines risk placing the resolution of the contest past dates Congress set for the safe harbor and the actual vote of the Electoral College. There is a real risk that Appellants’ votes will be rendered meaningless, and that they will be deprived of the ability to serve as electors, if either Minnesota loses its representation in the Electoral College or its asserted results do not qualify for the safe harbor.

C. The balance of equities weighs decidedly in favor of an injunction. “[I]t is always in the public interest to protect constitutional rights” and “[t]he

balance of equities generally favors...constitutionally-protected freedom[s].” *Rodgers v. Bryant*, 942 F.3d 451, 458 (8th Cir. 2019) (cleaned up). The Secretary has no interest in setting rules that the Constitution does not allow him to set. And the Secretary’s interest in settling a meritless lawsuit—challenging the age-old rule requiring votes to be in on Election Day—carries zero weight. *Cf. Shaw v. Hunt*, 517 U.S. 899, 908 n.4 (1996) (holding that a state has “no...interest in avoiding meritless lawsuits”). Further, even if the Secretary is (somehow) vindicated by the final resolution of this case, the harm of an erroneous ruling at this stage would be non-existent: the Secretary would simply be compelled to conduct this election the way every Minnesota Secretary of State has conducted elections for generations. And the State’s interest is for the valid laws enacted by its Legislature to be enforced. *See, e.g., Reprod. Health Servs. of Planned Parenthood of St. Louis Region, Inc. v. Nixon*, 428 F.3d 1139, 1144 (8th Cir. 2005) (recognizing a “State’s interest in enforcing its laws”).

D. The public interest most of all weighs in favor of an injunction. “[I]t is always in the public interest to protect constitutional rights,” *Phelps-Roper v. Nixon*, 545 F.3d 685, 690 (8th Cir. 2008), and the right to vote of each Minnesota citizen hangs in the balance and is directly threatened by the Secretary’s unlawful actions.

In addition to disenfranchisement of the State’s voters through losing their say in the Electoral College and selection of the President, the Secretary’s actions threaten widespread disenfranchisement of individual voters. If Appellants are right that the Secretary’s actions are unlawful, then voters who rely on those

actions to cast late-received ballots face the prospect that their votes will be tossed out through challenges on and after Election Day. By contrast, an injunction would define the rules of the election in advance so that voters can act accordingly and avoid total loss of their votes. In this way, an injunction best serves the Secretary's stated goal of minimizing voter confusion. And, even if the Secretary's view of the merits were ultimately to prevail, an injunction at this stage would cause no harm to the public interest, as the only effect would be to encourage voters to ensure that their ballots are received by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day—something that they can achieve through slightly earlier mail-in voting, in-person early or Election Day voting, or using a drop-box. In this respect, the public interest is one-sided, favoring the protection of Minnesota's voters against the Secretary's reckless disregard of federal law.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Court should enter an injunction pending appeal and expedite consideration of this appeal and this motion.

Date: October 15, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

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## CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

I hereby certify that the foregoing complies with the length limitations of Fed. R. App. P. 27(a) because it is 5,197 words. It complies with the typeface and type-style requirements of Rule 32(a)(5) and Rule 32(a)(6) because it is printed in 14-point Calisto MT font, a proportionally spaced face with serifs.

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## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on October 15, 2020, a true and correct copy of the foregoing was filed via the Court's CM/ECF system and will be served via electronic filing upon all counsel of record who have appeared or will appear in this case. I also certify that on the same day the following counsel have been served via electronic mail and overnight delivery.

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# EXHIBIT A

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA

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JAMES CARSON and ERIC LUCERO,

Case No. 20-CV-2030 (NEB/TNL)

Plaintiffs,

v.

ORDER ON MOTION FOR  
PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION

STEVE SIMON in his official capacity as  
Secretary of State of the State of  
Minnesota,

Defendant,

and

ROBERT LAROSE, TERESA MAPLES,  
MARY SANSOM, GARY SEVERSON,  
and MINNESOTA ALLIANCE FOR  
RETIRED AMERICANS EDUCATION  
FUND,

Intervenor Defendants.

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In connection with a Minnesota state court action challenging the constitutionality of several of Minnesota's election laws, Secretary of State Steve Simon ("Secretary Simon") entered into a consent decree (the "Consent Decree") with the Minnesota Alliance for Retired Americans Education Fund and several of its members (collectively, the "Alliance"). The Republican Party of Minnesota and others intervened and objected. After a hearing, the state court issued an order consistent with the Consent Decree,

ordering Secretary Simon not to enforce Minnesota’s statutorily-mandated absentee ballot receipt deadline of 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, November 3, 2020. Instead, the court ordered Secretary Simon to count ballots that are postmarked by November 3, so long as election officials receive them within a week of Election Day.

Plaintiffs James Carson and Eric Lucero are certified nominees of the Republican Party to be presidential electors in the 2020 United States Presidential Election (the “Electors”). The Electors now bring suit in this Court against Secretary Simon, alleging that the Consent Decree and the state court’s order confirming it are unconstitutional. The Electors move the Court for a preliminary injunction to enjoin enforcement of the state-court order. For the reasons that follow, the Court determines that the Electors lack standing and denies the motion for preliminary injunction.

## BACKGROUND

### I. The COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 is a highly infectious respiratory disease that has caused a global pandemic and killed over 210,000 Americans and 2,100 Minnesotans. *See generally* CDC, *Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> (last accessed Oct. 8, 2020); Minn. Dep’t of Health, *Situation Update for COVID-19*, <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html> (last accessed Oct. 8, 2020); (ECF No. 14, Ex. C at 2–4 (“Consent Decree Order”).) In response to COVID-19, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has issued a series of emergency executive orders in

an attempt to combat the spread of the virus throughout the state. *E.g.*, Emergency Exec. Orders 20-01, 20-20, 20-33, 20-48, 20-56, 20-74, 20-78, 20-81, 20-89, available at <https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp>. These orders include directives for Minnesotans to stay home, limit social gatherings, wear masks in public spaces, and reduce capacity for indoor events. Emergency Exec. Orders 20-20, 20-56, 20-81. Both the pandemic and these restrictions necessarily impact Minnesotans' ability to vote at the polls on Election Day.

## II. Federal Law Governing Elections

The Electors' claims are based in part on Article II of the Constitution, which grants state legislatures the authority to determine how to select presidential electors. The "Electors Clause" provides that "[e]ach State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of [Presidential] Electors . . . ." U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 2. Article I has a corresponding provision for the selection of Senators and Representatives, the "Elections Clause," which provides that the "Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations." U.S. Const. art. I § 4, cl. 1. The Electors Clause and Elections Clause have "considerable similarity," and interpretations of one clause may inform the other. *Ariz. State Leg. v. Ariz. Indep. Redistricting Comm'n*, 576 U.S. 787, 839 (2015) (Roberts, C.J., dissenting); see *Donald J. Trump for President, Inc. v. Bullock*, No. CV 20-66-H-DLC, 2020

WL 5810556, at \*11 (D. Mont. Sept. 30, 2020) (finding that the term “Legislature” has the same meaning in both clauses).

The Elections Clause gives a state legislature authority to involve other state actors, including members of the state’s executive branch, in setting the times, places, and manner of elections. U.S. Const. art. I § 4, cl. 1; *Ariz. State Leg.*, 576 U.S. at 816–18. The phrase “the Legislature thereof” in this clause does not refer exclusively to the legislature; rather, it refers to the ordinary “lawmaking processes of a state.” *Corman v. Torres*, 287 F. Supp. 3d 558, 573 (M.D. Pa. 2018) (three-judge panel) (citing *Ariz. State Leg.*, 576 U.S. at 816–18).

The Electors Clause similarly gives a state legislature discretion in prescribing the process for selecting presidential electors. *McPherson v. Blacker*, 146 U.S. 1, 25–26 (1892). Under this clause, each state must appoint electors “in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct.” U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 2. The words “in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct” do not mean that the legislature itself must select the electors for a given election; rather, they mean that the legislature has the sole authority to prescribe the process through which the state selects those electors. *Id.*; *McPherson*, 146 U.S. at 25 (citing U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 2). The legislature may (1) delegate the authority to select electors to the public at large, (2) delegate the authority to the executive, or (3) prescribe a different procedure entirely. *Id.* at 25–26. The Electors Clause operates only to ensure that the legislature determines how the electors are selected. *Id.*

The Electors also raise a claim under federal law governing the date of a presidential election. Under the Constitution, Congress has the power to set the date on which the presidential election occurs; that day must be the same throughout the country. U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 4. Congress used that power to set “the Tuesday next after the first Monday in November” as the date for selecting presidential electors. 3 U.S.C. § 1. This year, Election Day falls on November 3. Once selected, the presidential electors meet on “the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December.” 3 U.S.C. § 7. This year, that date is December 14. Congress has also provided that it must generally accept the votes of electors selected and certified by six days prior to the meeting of the Electoral College—often called the “safe harbor.” 3 U.S.C. § 5. Essentially, under the safe harbor, so long as a state certifies its election results by six days before the meeting of the Electoral College—this year, by December 8—Congress must almost always accept those electors’ votes.<sup>1</sup>

### **III. Minnesota Election Laws, the Secretary of State’s Authority to Issue Rules for Elections, and Minnesota’s Counting Procedures**

Minnesota has a no-excuse absentee voting system, which permits any eligible voter to vote absentee for any reason. Minn. Stat. § 203B.02 subd. 1. Absentee voting begins 46 days before Election Day; in 2020, that date was September 18. Minn. Stat. § 203B.081 subd. 1. A voter seeking to vote absentee may request a ballot at any time up

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<sup>1</sup> Congress may decline to accept votes that are not “regularly given by electors” so long as both Houses agree to do so. 3 U.S.C. § 15.



to the day before Election Day and local election officials are responsible for providing ballots to those voters. Minn. Stat. §§ 203B.04–.07.

By Minnesota statute, to be counted, an absentee ballot must reach election officials by either 3:00 p.m. (for hand-delivered ballots) or 8:00 p.m. (for mail-delivered ballots) on Election Day (the “Receipt Deadline”). Minn. Stat. § 203B.08 subd. 3; Minn. R. 8210.2200 subp. 1. Ballots received after the Receipt Deadline are marked as “late” and cannot be counted. Minn. Stat. § 203B.08 subd. 3. Many other states have similar Receipt Deadlines,<sup>2</sup> which differ from Postmark Deadlines, where ballots are counted if they are postmarked by Election Day but received afterwards.<sup>3</sup> The difference between these two absentee-ballot counting deadlines—and which one Minnesota will follow—is the crux of this case.

What happens when an absentee ballot is received is not the subject of much dispute. Minnesota law sets out a specific procedure for accepting, rejecting, and

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 16-547(C) (“In order to be valid and counted, the ballot . . . must be delivered . . . no later than 7:00 p.m. on election day.”); Colo. Rev. Stat. § 1-7.5-107(4)(b)(II) (“All envelopes containing mail ballots must be in the hands of the county clerk . . . no later than 7 p.m. on the day of the election.”).

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Alaska Stat. § 15.20.081(e) (“[T]he ballot may not be counted unless it is received by the close of business on the 10th day after the election. If the ballot is postmarked, it must be postmarked on or before election day.”); D.C. Code § 1-1001.05(a)(10A) (stating that the D.C. Board of Elections must accept “absentee ballots postmarked . . . on or before the day of the election, and received by the Board no later than the 7th day after the election”) (also amended to allow for the 10th day after the election in 2020).

counting absentee ballots. Minn. Stat. § 203B.121. Each county has a ballot board that is responsible for either accepting or rejecting each absentee ballot. *Id.* subds. 1, 2. Upon receipt of an absentee ballot, the ballot board decides, based on several criteria, whether to accept or reject the ballot.<sup>4</sup> *Id.* subd. 2. Generally, the ballot board begins to process “accepted” absentee ballots one week before the election (the “Processing Window”). *Id.* subd. 4. 2020 brings a different circumstance, and so Minnesota enacted special legislation extending the Processing Window to two weeks before Election Day. 2020 Minn. Sess. Law Serv. ch. 77 § 1 subd. 3 (altering certain Minnesota election laws for 2020 only). After the close of business two weeks before an election, a voter whose ballot the ballot board has accepted may not cast another ballot. *Id.* On each day during the Processing Window, the ballot board places absentee ballots in the ballot box to be counted separately from ballots cast in person. Minn. Stat. § 203B.121 subds. 4, 5. Once all absentee ballots have been received and counted, the tallies are added to the returns from in-person votes. *Id.* subd. 5(b).

After that process is complete, the final tallies are reported to a canvassing board. Minn. Stat. §§ 204C.19, 204C.31 subd. 3. There is one canvassing board for each county in Minnesota and one statewide canvassing board. Minn. Stat. § 204C.31 subds. 1, 2. The county canvassing boards meet to certify each county’s election results between three and

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<sup>4</sup> Depending on the proximity to Election Day, the ballot board must take certain steps to contact a voter whose absentee ballot it rejects and offer the voter the opportunity to correct any errors. Minn. Stat. § 203B.121 subd. 2(c).

ten days following Election Day. Minn. Stat. § 204C.33 subd. 1. The county boards then transmit those certifications to the secretary of state. *Id.* On the third Tuesday following Election Day, the state canvassing board meets to certify the results from each county board; this year, that day is November 24. *Id.* subd. 3. The state canvassing board then has three days to certify the statewide results of the election. *Id.*

In a presidential election, these results are used to select the state's electors for the Electoral College. Minn. Stat. §§ 208.02, 208.03, 208.05. The electors chosen by the party that receives the most votes must cast their electoral votes for their party's nominee. Minn. Stat. § 208.43. If an elector fails to vote as required, he or she vacates the office of elector, and the secretary of state follows a statutory procedure to choose an alternate to fill the vacant seat. Minn. Stat. §§ 208.45, 208.46.

The processes described above are, for the most part, statutory. These same statutes give the secretary of state, as Minnesota's chief election official, duties and responsibilities. *See, e.g.*, Minn. Stat. § 204B.27 (describing multiple election-related responsibilities of the secretary of state); *see also Clark v. Pawlenty*, 755 N.W.2d 293, 299 (Minn. 2008); Minn. Const. art. VII, § 8. For example, the legislature has delegated to the secretary of state the authority to prescribe rules for the receipt of absentee ballots in addition to those the legislature has specified. Minn. Stat. § 203B.08 subd. 4. And in cases where provisions of Minnesota's election laws cannot be implemented "as a result of an order of a state or federal court," the legislature has directed that the secretary of state

“shall adopt alternative election procedures to permit the administration of any election affected by the order. The procedures may include the voting and handling of ballots cast after 8:00 p.m. as a result of a state or federal court order.” Minn. Stat. § 204B.47.

#### **IV. The State Court Proceedings and Resulting Changes to Election Proceedings**

On May 13, 2020, the Alliance<sup>5</sup> sued Secretary Simon to enjoin enforcement of the Receipt Deadline.<sup>6</sup> *LaRose v. Simon*, No. 62-CV-20-3149 (Minn. Dist. Ct. 2020) (“*LaRose*”). In *LaRose*, the Alliance alleged that the Receipt Deadline is unconstitutional because it “disenfranchises thousands of voters” who timely mail their ballots, but whose ballots are not received by election officials by the Receipt Deadline.<sup>7</sup> (ECF No. 14, Ex. A (“*LaRose* Compl.”) ¶ 7.) The Alliance asserted that the Receipt Deadline is unconstitutional under

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<sup>5</sup> The Alliance was joined by Robert LaRose, Teresa Maples, Mary Samson, and Gary Severson as individual plaintiffs. (ECF No. 14, Ex. A at 1.) Each of the state-court plaintiffs is a Defendant Intervenor before this Court.

<sup>6</sup> The Alliance also challenged Minnesota’s requirement that each absentee ballot be witnessed by a registered Minnesota voter, notary, or person authorized to administer oaths. (ECF No. 14, Ex. A ¶ 5); *See* Minn. Stat. § 203B.07. This witness requirement is not at issue here, but voters have challenged similar requirements in other states. *See, e.g., Common Cause R.I. v. Gorbea*, 970 F.3d 11 (1st Cir. 2020) (challenging Rhode Island’s requirement of two witnesses per absentee ballot).

<sup>7</sup> Voters in other states have filed similar challenges to their states’ Receipt Deadlines. *See, e.g., Pa. Democratic Party v. Boockvar*, No. 133 MM 2020, \_\_ A.3d \_\_, 2020 WL 5554644 (Pa. Sept. 17, 2020) (challenging various aspects of Pennsylvania’s mail-in ballot procedures, including a Receipt Deadline); *Democratic Nat’l Comm. v. Bostelmann*, No. 20-cv-249-wmc, 2020 WL 5627186 (W.D. Wis. Sept. 21, 2020) (challenging various Wisconsin election laws, including the state’s Receipt Deadline).

normal circumstances, but that COVID-19 makes it even more unjustifiable due to an increase in absentee ballots overwhelming the United States Postal Service. (*Id.*) Specifically, the Alliance alleged that the Receipt Deadline constitutes an undue burden on the right to vote in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments, as well as a deprivation of procedural due process under the Fourteenth Amendment. (*Id.* ¶¶ 123–42.) The Alliance sought an injunction directing Secretary Simon to accept timely postmarked absentee ballots received within a “reasonable” time after Election Day. (*Id.* Prayer for Relief.) The Alliance sought this relief for both the August 11, 2020 primary election (the “Primary”) and the November 3, 2020 general election. (*See id.* ¶ 3.)

On June 17, 2020, the Honorable Sara Grewing, Judge of the Second Judicial District, State of Minnesota, entered a court order and partial consent decree resolving the Alliance’s claims regarding the Primary (the “Primary Consent Decree Order”).<sup>8</sup> (ECF No. 36-1, Ex. A at 1, 14.) Pursuant to the Primary Consent Decree Order, Secretary Simon agreed not to enforce the Receipt Deadline; instead, election officials would accept all absentee ballots received up to two days after the Primary so long as they were postmarked on or before the date of the Primary. (*Id.* at 7–8.) Secretary Simon also agreed to issue instructions to elections officials about the change. These included enclosing information with each absentee ballot telling voters that their ballot could arrive up to

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<sup>8</sup> No party intervened to challenge the Primary Consent Decree Order.

two days after the date of the election, as well as taking additional steps to tell the public that the Receipt Deadline would not be enforced. (*Id.* at 8–9.)<sup>9</sup> After the state court entered the Primary Consent Decree Order, the parties continued to litigate the Alliance’s challenges to the Receipt Deadline for the general election.

In support of its claim that the Receipt Deadline was unconstitutional, the Alliance offered the expert declaration of Kenneth R. Mayer, Ph.D, a political science professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. (ECF No. 39-1, Ex. 10 (“Mayer Decl.”).) Professor Mayer’s research indicated that, absent a change to the Receipt Deadline, “tens of thousands” of Minnesotans could have their absentee ballots rejected. (*Id.* at 1.) Specifically, Professor Mayer determined that if half of Minnesotans voted by mail (approximately 1.5 million ballots or more), enforcement of the Receipt Deadline could result in the rejection of over 12,000 ballots. (*Id.* at 14.) Professor Mayer also analyzed instances of absentee voter fraud in Minnesota, finding only two cases since 1979, both of which involved a single ballot; given that voters had cast over 45 million ballots since

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<sup>9</sup> Secretary Simon did so in part by stating on his official website that an absentee ballot that was postmarked on or before August 11, 2020 (the date of the Primary), would be accepted and counted so long as election officials received it prior to the county canvass, which would take place on either the second or third day after the Primary. Minn. Sec’y of State, *Vote Early by Mail*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200805091323/https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/vote-early-by-mail/>. These steps are nearly identical to the steps taken thus far for the general election. (*Compare* Primary Consent Decree Order at 7–9, *with* Consent Decree at 9–11 (detailing Secretary Simon’s obligations under the Primary Consent Decree Order and Consent Decree).)

1975, the voter fraud rate was 0.000004%. (*Id.* at 15.) Professor Mayer concluded that the Receipt Deadline imposes a burden on eligible Minnesota voters. (*Id.*)

On June 18, 2020, one day after the Primary Consent Decree Order, the Republican Party of Minnesota, the Republican National Committee, and the National Republican Congressional Committee moved to intervene in *LaRose*; President Trump's campaign, Donald J. Trump for President, Inc., later joined as an intervenor (together, the "State Court Intervenors"). (Consent Decree Order at 7; ECF No. 39-1, Ex. 15.) On July 2, 2020, the Alliance asked the state court to issue an injunction for the general election containing essentially the same relief afforded by the Primary Consent Decree Order. (Consent Decree Order at 8.) On July 17, 2020, Secretary Simon and the Alliance filed the Consent Decree and asked the state court to approve it. (*Id.*) The State Court Intervenors opposed. After a hearing on the Consent Decree, the state court entered the Consent Decree Order on August 3, 2020. (*Id.* at 1, 8; ECF No. 14, Ex. B (Consent Decree) at 16.)

In the Consent Decree, Secretary Simon agreed that the Alliance's challenge presented a serious constitutional issue. (Consent Decree at 3–4, 6–7.) Thus, as he had for the Primary, he agreed not to enforce the Receipt Deadline as set out in Minnesota Statutes Section 203B.08, subdivision 3, among others. (*Id.* at 9.) Instead, as he had for the Primary, Secretary Simon agreed that he would "issue guidance" to local election officials to "count all mail-in ballots" with a postmark of Election Day or before, if those election officials received the ballots within five business days (seven calendar days) of Election

Day (the “Postmark Deadline”). (*Id.* at 10.) The Consent Decree also included a provision that if a mail ballot did not have a postmark, the election official “should presume that it was mailed on or before Election Day unless the preponderance of the evidence demonstrates it was mailed after Election Day.” (*Id.*)

In the Consent Decree Order, the state court analyzed the Consent Decree under both Minnesota and federal law and determined that, under either standard, the Consent Decree was appropriate given the constitutional concerns over the Receipt Deadline in the midst of the pandemic. The federal standard, which is a more searching review than the Minnesota standard, requires a court to weigh the plaintiff’s likelihood of success on the merits against the relief offered. (*Id.* at 17); see *Carson v. Am. Brands, Inc.*, 450 U.S. 79, 88 n.14 (1981) (“Courts judge the fairness of a proposed compromise by weighing the plaintiff’s likelihood of success on the merits against the amount and form of the relief offered in the settlement.”).

Under the Minnesota standard, the state court determined that the Consent Decree was appropriate because it was nonpartisan, was limited to the November 2020 election, and gave Secretary Simon enough time to instruct election officials and voters on the new procedures before voting started on September 18. (Consent Decree Order at 18.) The court further concluded that the State Court Intervenors were unable to provide evidence that the Consent Decree was a product of fraud, neglect, or absence of consent, and was therefore proper under Minnesota law. (*Id.* at 19.)



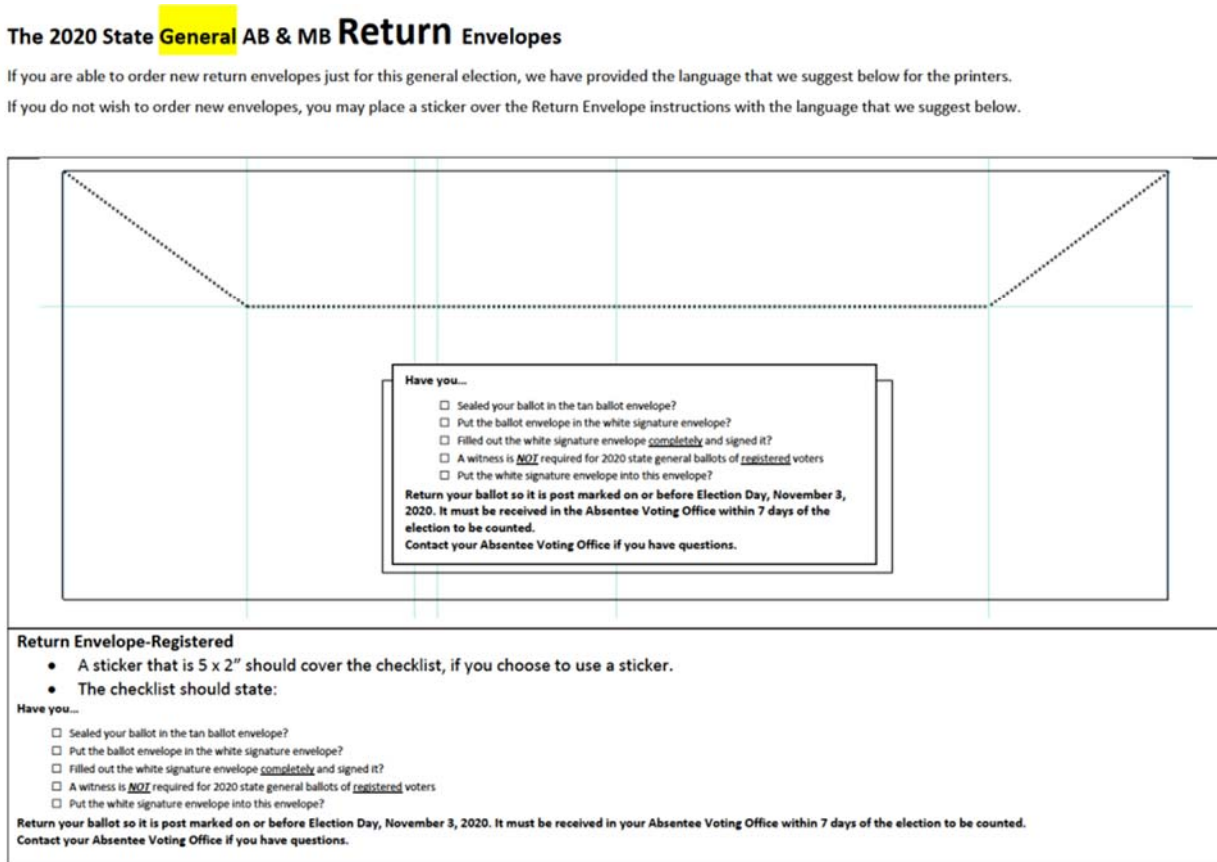
Under the federal standard, the state court concluded that the Consent Decree was proper because the Alliance was likely to succeed on the merits of its claims. (*Id.*) Drawing on the fact that many courts across the nation were facing the same issues, the state court determined that Secretary Simon’s decision to enter into the Consent Decree was “reasonable.” (*Id.* at 21–22.) Based on the burdens COVID-19 was likely to impose upon Minnesota voters, and potential postal service delays, the court again noted that it was “reasonable” for Secretary Simon to conclude that the Alliance was likely to succeed on the merits of its claims. (*Id.* at 23–25.) The court also noted that, in the absence of the Consent Decree, it would have had the authority to issue such injunctive relief on the merits. (*Id.* at 24.)

The State Court Intervenors appealed the Consent Decree Order to the Minnesota Supreme Court. They then promptly dropped the appeal. On August 18, 2020, the parties stipulated to the dismissal of all appeals and waived their right to challenge the Consent Decree in any other judicial forum. (ECF No. 39-1, Ex. 15 at 2–3.) The Minnesota Supreme Court dismissed the appeals the same day. (ECF No. 39-1, Ex. 16.)

#### **V. Secretary Simon’s Instructions to Voters**

After entry of the Consent Decree Order on August 3, Secretary Simon prepared ballots in compliance with the Consent Decree. On August 28, Secretary Simon issued guidance to state election officials as agreed in the Consent Decree. (ECF No. 39-1, Ex. 21 (“Absentee Ballot Guidance”); Consent Decree at 10.) In the Absentee Ballot Guidance,

Secretary Simon provided state election officials with documents to be used as instructions for absentee ballots. (Absentee Ballot Guidance at 3–10.) For example, the Absentee Ballot Guidance included instructions for adding the following language to absentee ballot return envelopes:



(*Id.* at 8.) The Absentee Ballot Guidance also directed election officials to include the following language with each ballot, instructing voters that the ballot must be postmarked by November 3 and would be received and counted up to one week after Election Day:

**For the 2020 Minnesota State General Election  
being held November 3, 2020!!**

**Registered Minnesota Voters**

Because you are a registered voter in the State of Minnesota when this ballot packet was sent to you, you are NOT required to have a witness for the 2020 Minnesota State General Elections returned ballots.

Your returned ballot must be postmarked  
**on or before** Election Day (November 3, 2020)  
& received by your Absentee Voting Office within 7 days  
of the election.... to be counted.

If you do not want to use the U.S. post office or private  
delivery service to return your voted ballot, please  
contact your Absentee Voting Office (listed on return  
envelope) and inquire as to “drop off” locations.

“Drop Off” locations, dates & hours may vary.

(*Id.* at 12.)<sup>10</sup> Minnesota voters who requested absentee ballots for the general election began receiving their ballots on September 18, 2020, when early voting began. (ECF

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<sup>10</sup> This information is substantially the same as that used in the primary election following the Primary Consent Decree Order. Minn. Sec’y of State, *Vote Early by Mail*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200805091323/https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/vote-early-by-mail/>.

No. 37 (“Maeda Decl.”) ¶ 3.) As of September 29, over 1 million Minnesota voters had requested absentee ballots. (*Id.* ¶ 4.)

## VI. Procedural History of this Lawsuit

The Electors filed the Complaint on September 22, 2020, seven weeks after entry of the Consent Decree. (ECF No. 1 (“Compl.”).) The Electors bring two claims. Count I asserts that Secretary Simon exceeded his authority by entering into the Consent Decree and agreeing to accept absentee ballots after the Receipt Deadline, thereby violating the Electors Clause. (*Id.* ¶¶ 75–83.) Count II asserts that, by agreeing to accept absentee ballots after the Receipt Deadline, Secretary Simon violated the congressional mandate that Election Day be held on November 3. (*Id.* ¶¶ 84–90); 3 U.S.C. § 1.

The Electors are both Minnesota residents and registered voters. (Compl. ¶¶ 7–8.) Carson is a resident of Ramsey County and Lucero resides in Wright County. (*Id.*) Lucero is also a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, representing District 30B. (*Id.* ¶ 8.) The Electors are certified under Minnesota Statutes Section 203B.08 as nominees of the Republican Party to be presidential electors in 2020. (*Id.* ¶¶ 7–8.) The parties agree that the Electors are properly certified, meaning that they are candidates for the office of presidential elector.

The Electors filed their Motion for Preliminary Injunction on September 24, 2020, requesting expedited handling. (ECF No. 12.) On September 25, the Alliance moved to intervene, a request to which both Secretary Simon and the Electors consented, and which

the Court granted. (ECF Nos. 20, 22, 23, 33.) Following an expedited briefing schedule, the Court heard oral argument on the Motion on October 2. (ECF No. 45.)

## ANALYSIS

### I. The Electors Lack Standing

“The doctrine of standing asks whether a litigant is entitled to have a federal court resolve his grievance. This inquiry involves ‘both constitutional limitations on federal-court jurisdiction and prudential limitations on its exercise.’” *Kowalski v. Tesmer*, 543 U.S. 125, 128 (2004) (quoting *Warth v. Seldin*, 422 U.S. 490, 498 (1975)). Secretary Simon and the Alliance argue that the Electors lack Article III and prudential standing to bring their claims, and so the Court considers both theories. At this stage of the litigation, the Court assumes that the allegations in the Complaint are true and views them in the light most favorable to the Electors. *Jones v. Jegley*, 947 F.3d 1100, 1103 (8th Cir. 2020). The Electors bear the burden of establishing standing and must clearly allege facts demonstrating each element. *Susan B. Anthony List v. Driehaus*, 573 U.S. 149, 158 (2014).

#### A. Article III Standing

The jurisdiction of federal courts is limited to cases and controversies. U.S. Const. art III, § 2; *Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 559 (1992). Standing is a jurisdictional requirement “rooted in the traditional understanding of a case or controversy.” *Spokeo, Inc. v. Robins*, 136 S. Ct. 1540, 1547 (2016). Under the familiar three-part standing inquiry, plaintiffs must show that they have “(1) suffered an injury in fact, (2) that is fairly

traceable to the challenged conduct of the defendant, and (3) that is likely to be redressed by a favorable judicial decision.” *Id.* (citing *Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 560–61).

To meet the first prong of this inquiry—injury in fact—a plaintiff must show that he or she suffered an “invasion of a legally protected interest” that is concrete and particularized, and “actual or imminent, not conjectural or hypothetical.” *Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 560 (quotation marks and citation omitted). Where, as here, a plaintiff alleges future injury, the alleged injury may suffice to confer standing if the threatened injury is “certainly impending,” or there is a “substantial risk that the harm will occur.” *Susan B. Anthony List*, 573 U.S. at 158 (quotation marks and citation omitted). Although the imminence of future injuries is an “elastic concept,” it cannot be too speculative. *Clapper v. Amnesty Int’l USA*, 568 U.S. 398, 409 (2013) (citation omitted). The “threatened injury must be *certainly impending* to constitute injury in fact,” and “‘allegations of *possible* future injury’ are not sufficient.” *Id.* (quoting *Whitmore v. Arkansas*, 495 U.S. 149, 158 (1990) (emphasis original)).

The injury must also “affect the plaintiff in a personal and individual way.” *Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 560 n.1. Claims that are “plainly undifferentiated and common to all members of the public” are generalized grievances, not injuries that give rise to standing. *Lance v. Coffman*, 549 U.S. 437, 441–42 (2007) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). For example, a claim that a state has violated the Elections Clause is “precisely the kind of undifferentiated, generalized grievance” that does not confer standing. *Id.* at 442; *see*

*Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 574 (quoting *Fairchild v. Hughes*, 258 U.S. 126, 129–30 (1922), and *Massachusetts v. Mellon*, 262 U.S. 447, 488–89 (1923)).

To meet the second prong—causation—the plaintiff must show that there is some link between the alleged injury and the challenged conduct, which must not be “too attenuated.” *Red River Freethinkers v. City of Fargo*, 679 F.3d 1015, 1023 (8th Cir. 2012) (quoting *Allen v. Wright*, 468 U.S. 737, 752 (1984)).

With this framework in mind, the Court turns to the Electors’ allegations. They raise four theories of injury to support standing: vote dilution; uncertainty over how to vote; a risk to safe harbor compliance; and damage to their prospects for election as candidates for office. The Court considers each; none confers standing.

*1. Vote Dilution as Injury*

The Electors assert that they have standing as voters (as differentiated from their status as candidates for the office of presidential elector), because the counting of absentee ballots received after Election Day will injure them by diluting the value of their votes. (ECF No. 44 (“Reply”) at 15–16.) The Electors’ theory is that votes received after Election Day are invalid and unlawful, and thus counting these votes will increase the total amount of votes cast, which will in turn render their own lawful votes less influential.<sup>11</sup> (Compl. ¶ 68.)

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<sup>11</sup> This theory presumes the Electors’ votes are either in-person or absentee but received by election officials on or before Election Day.

There is little dispute that, in certain cases, vote dilution can be a cognizable injury that confers standing. *E.g.*, *United States v. Hays*, 515 U.S. 737, 744–45 (1995) (“Where a plaintiff resides in a racially gerrymandered district [and has therefore had his or her vote diluted], . . . the plaintiff has been denied equal treatment because of the legislature’s reliance on racial criteria, and therefore has standing to challenge the legislature’s action.”). It does not follow that all forms of vote dilution give rise to standing. The Electors have not explained, for instance, why the principles underlying standing in racial gerrymandering cases (where a state legislature or redistricting committee takes affirmative action that dilutes or restricts the votes of a specific minority population) should extend to the present case, where the official action (entry of the Consent Decree Order) expands voting rights for all. In *Gill v. Whitford*, the Supreme Court recognized that plaintiffs in past vote-dilution cases had standing when their claimed injuries were “individual and personal in nature,” and the plaintiffs had alleged “facts showing disadvantage to themselves as individuals.” 138 S. Ct. 1916, 1929–30 (2018) (quoting *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533, 561 (1964), and *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186, 206 (1962)).

This case presents a different circumstance. The Electors allege that their votes will be diluted, but such dilution affects all Minnesota voters equally, giving no disadvantage to the Electors. Indeed, the Electors’ claim of vote dilution is a paradigmatic generalized grievance that cannot support standing. The prospect of hypothetical unlawful votes in the upcoming presidential election is not a harm unique to the Electors.



Illustrating this principle, in the many challenges to state election laws leading to the November election, other courts have rejected similar vote dilution theories. *See, e.g., Donald J. Trump for President, Inc. v. Cegavske*, No. 2:20-cv-1445JCMVCF, 2020 WL 5626974, at \*4 (D. Nev. Sept. 18, 2020) (determining that plaintiffs' vote dilution theory was a generalized grievance and too speculative to confer standing); *Martel v. Condos*, No. 5:20-cv-131, 2020 WL 5755289, at \*4 (D. Vt. Sept. 16, 2020) (concluding that plaintiffs' vote dilution theory amounted to a generalized grievance); *Paher v. Cegavske*, No. 3:20-cv-00243MMDWGC, 2020 WL 2748301, at \*4 (D. Nev. May 27, 2020) (determining that plaintiffs' claim that their votes would be diluted as a result of an election conducted exclusively by vote-by-mail was too generalized); *Am. Civil Rights Union v. Martinez-Rivera*, 166 F. Supp. 3d 779, 789 (W.D. Tex. 2015) (upholding a magistrate judge's conclusion that plaintiff's vote dilution claim was speculative and a generalized grievance as not clearly erroneous).

At oral argument and in their reply brief, the Electors maintain that these recent cases are distinguishable because in these cases, the plaintiffs alleged future vote dilution caused by potential fraud, *i.e.*, "dilution-through-fraudulent-voting," rather than "the certainty that ballots will be counted in violation of federal law."<sup>12</sup> (Reply at 16.) In *Paher*,

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<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding counsel's assertions that the Electors are not relying on claims of voter fraud, the Electors' Reply Brief states:

Under [Secretary Simon's] policy, voters have no incentive to mail their ballots early, drop them off, or vote in person, meaning that many ballots will arrive after Election Day. Worse, persons watching the elongated

for example, Nevada’s secretary of state planned to conduct Nevada’s presidential primary exclusively by mail. 2020 WL 2748301, at \*2. The plaintiffs, Nevada voters, claimed that conducting an election exclusively by mail would “strip[] voter-fraud-prevention safeguards” and cause dilution of their votes due to a hypothesized increase in voter fraud. *Id.* The court found this alleged injury too generalized to confer standing because the claims were “materially grounded on ostensible election fraud that may be conceivably raised *by any Nevada voter.*” *Id.* at \*4 (emphasis original). The Electors attempt to distinguish their case from *Paher* and assertions of injury through potential voter fraud by arguing that here “the entire point of [Secretary Simon’s] actions is to count votes that, as a matter of federal law, are ineligible.” (Reply at 16.) This is a distinction without a difference. In both cases, the plaintiffs allege that the votes are unlawful, whether by fraud or by arriving “late” pursuant to the Consent Decree Order. According to the Electors, both types of unlawful ballots would dilute votes. And in both cases, the counting of those ballots is a generalized grievance, affecting all Minnesota voters in the same way. Regardless of how the Electors characterize the challenged ballots, the

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ballot-counting unfolding under this new “Election Week” will face strong incentives to cast a ballot, and those who already cast their ballot will find new incentive to vote again. This is not a “specter;” it’s called “human nature.”

(Reply at 20–21.) The Court is at a loss to understand the Electors’ claim as anything other than an argument that it is human nature to commit voter fraud—a felony in the State of Minnesota. Minn. Stat. § 201.014 subd. 3.

outcome is the same: allegations of vote dilution due to the counting of hypothetical, allegedly unlawful ballots is a generalized grievance that does not confer standing.

2. *Uncertainty as Injury*

The Electors also argue that unless there is a “clear determination as to what rules govern under federal law in advance of Election Day,” chaos and uncertainty will result. (Reply at 14; ECF No. 13 (“Pl. Br.”) at 7–8.) As a result of this uncertainty, the Electors claim that they will not be able to determine whether to vote in person or by mail. (Pl. Br. at 7–8.)

Voter confusion as injury fares no better than the Electors’ vote dilution theory. The Electors’ alleged confusion and uncertainty is speculative at best; they can do no more than guess what will occur if the Court does not enjoin the Consent Decree Order. The Electors’ conclusory assertion that voters will not know whether to vote in person or by mail is unsupported by factual allegations or the record.

In reality, the Electors are in danger of creating confusion rather than avoiding it. After the state court entered the Primary Consent Decree Order on June 17, voters were informed that the Receipt Deadline would not apply to the Primary. (*See* Primary Consent Decree Order at 7–9, 13.) And once the state court entered the Consent Decree Order on August 3, voters were informed that the Receipt Deadline was changed for the general election as well.

The record is replete with information provided to Minnesota voters about the Postmark Deadline. Secretary Simon directed state election officials to prepare ballots highlighting that absentee ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received within seven days of the election to be counted. (Absentee Ballot Guidance.) Over one million Minnesotans have requested absentee ballots, and as of September 18, those voters began receiving those ballots with clear instructions stating that the Postmark Deadline applied. (Maeda Decl. ¶¶ 3–4.) Many news sources, including Secretary Simon’s official website,<sup>13</sup> have told their readers, listeners, and watchers that the Postmark Deadline applies. (ECF No. 39-1, Exs. 22–26 (news sources, including Secretary Simon’s website, KARE 11, CNN, Twin Cities Pioneer Press, and ABC News, reporting on the Postmark Deadline).) And this evidence comports with the experiences of voters in the Primary. (Primary Consent Decree Order at 7–8; Minn. Sec’y of State, *Vote Early by Mail*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200805091323/https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/vote-early-by-mail/>.)

This is a difficult genie to put back in the lamp. Giving Minnesota voters conflicting

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<sup>13</sup> The instructions on Secretary Simon’s official page are available in eleven different languages: English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese, Lao, Oromo, Khmer, and Amharic. Minn. Sec’y of State, *Vote Early by Mail*, <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/vote-early-by-mail/> (last accessed Oct. 8, 2020).

messages after they have received their absentee ballots would certainly cause some of those voters uncertainty and confusion.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, to the extent the Electors seek certainty, they have it. Secretary Simon, having been sued in state court, considered Minnesota Statute Section 203B.08's Receipt Deadline, and concluded that, as applied in the pandemic, it raised constitutional issues. (Consent Decree at 3–4, 6–7.) Through the Consent Decree, he remedied this issue by implementing a Postmark Deadline. (*Id.* at 9–10.) A state-court judge analyzed the Consent Decree, concluded that Section 203B.08 was likely unconstitutional as applied in this pandemic, and ordered Secretary Simon to implement the Postmark Deadline. (Consent Decree Order at 19–25.) The Secretary did so, sending out ballots and informing voters of the Postmark Deadline. (Absentee Ballot Guidance; Maeda Decl. ¶¶ 3–4.) Minnesota voters have now begun to vote pursuant to the Postmark Deadline rule. The

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<sup>14</sup> The Court is also cognizant of the equitable principle that district courts should be wary of changing the rules of elections near Election Day, which is in essence what the Electors are asking the Court to do. *Purcell v. Gonzalez*, 549 U.S. 1 (2006) (expressing disfavor of court orders altering election rules in the weeks leading up to an election). The Supreme Court has recently reaffirmed the *Purcell* principle. See *Republican Nat'l Comm. v. Democratic Nat'l Comm.*, 140 S. Ct. 1205, 1207 (2020) (“This Court has repeatedly emphasized that lower federal courts should ordinarily not alter the election rules on the eve of an election.”); cf. *Republican Nat'l Comm. v. Common Cause R.I.*, No. 20A28, -- S.Ct. --, 2020 WL 4680151, at \*1 (U.S. Aug. 13, 2020) (denying an application for a stay in part to avoid disrupting the status quo voting procedure that voters would expect). Given the timing and procedural posture of this case, an injunction by this Court upsetting the Consent Decree Order may well violate *Purcell*. Due to its jurisdictional determination, the Court need not make this call, but it is well aware of its import in this context.

Court sees no confusion or uncertainty in this chain of events. This theory cannot support standing.

3. *Safe Harbor Deadline as Injury*

The Electors next claim they have standing because as Electors and candidates for office, they would be injured by possible “last-minute litigation over ballot eligibility” that would prevent certification of Minnesota’s election results before the safe harbor deadline. (Reply at 14.) Aside from the “significant expense” that this litigation would cause them, the Electors also posit that there is a risk that such litigation would extend past the statutory safe harbor deadline, which would, according to the Electors’ argument, permit Congress to disregard Minnesota’s electoral votes. (*Id.*) Although the articulated injury under the safe harbor theory is sufficiently particular to the Electors, it ultimately fails to confer standing because this injury relies on a “highly attenuated chain of possibilities” that is not certainly impending, and thus, cannot support standing. *Clapper*, 568 U.S. at 410.

There are two ways that the State of Minnesota could fail to obtain safe harbor. First, Minnesota could change the procedures it uses to appoint electors after Election Day. 3 U.S.C. § 5; *Bush v. Palm Beach Cnty. Canvassing Bd.*, 531 U.S. 70, 77-78 (2000). Second, Minnesota could fail to determine which set of electors represent the State at the national meeting of presidential electors by the safe harbor deadline. 3 U.S.C. § 5.

The Electors appear to rely primarily on the second situation to support this standing theory.<sup>15</sup> (Reply at 13–15.) They claim that the “well-known realities of drawn-out post-election litigation” pose a risk that the State’s election results will not be certified in time to satisfy the safe harbor provision. (*Id.* at 16.) The prospect of post-election litigation that would prevent Minnesota from meeting the safe harbor deadline is unsupported by any factual allegations. And the record again supports the opposite conclusion—Secretary Simon’s actions under the Consent Decree are designed to ensure that the necessary deadlines are met. And as noted by the Intervenor, other states’ statutorily-enacted ballot-receipt deadlines match or exceed the provisions of the Consent Decree, and nothing before the Court indicates those states have had difficulty meeting the safe harbor deadline in past elections. (ECF No. 38 (“Intervenors’ Br.”) at 26 n.3 (citing statutes of Illinois, Alaska, and Ohio)).

Moreover, in the implausible event that Minnesota fails to meet the safe harbor deadline, there are no allegations supporting the notion that it would lose its representation in the Electoral College. The Electors allege that the Consent Decree poses “a clear and present danger that Minnesota’s election results will not be accepted under

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<sup>15</sup> To the extent the Electors rely on the first situation, their claimed injury is too speculative to confer standing. The safe harbor provision would be violated in this manner, if at all, only after Election Day and only if Minnesota changed the way it chooses electors. 3 U.S.C. § 5. Multiple entities could cause such a violation: a court, the legislature, or the secretary of state, among others. Speculation that one of these entities will change Minnesota election law after Election Day and cause Minnesota to violate the safe harbor provision is not a sufficient injury to confer standing.

the safe harbor law and therefore will not be accepted by the United States Congress in determining the winner of the presidential election.” (Pl. Br. at 16.) But even if a state fails to meet the safe harbor deadline, Congress is not simply free to disregard the state’s election results at will.<sup>16</sup> The safe harbor provision imposes no requirements on the states; rather, it offers their election results protection. Although meeting the safe harbor deadline effectively ensures that Congress will count a state’s electoral votes, the inverse is not necessarily true. Under Title 3, United States Code, Section 15, when Congress receives only one set of electoral votes from a state, Congress may not reject those votes except in narrow circumstances.<sup>17</sup> To suppose that Congress would make such findings requires a good deal of speculation; to further suppose that Congress would make these findings because of Secretary Simon’s actions here requires even more.

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<sup>16</sup> “If any State neglects to appoint electors under the safe harbor provision, the two Houses of Congress . . . are to resort to other provisions of the Electoral Count Act of 1887 to determine who are the legally appointed electors of the State. The Act contemplates no exclusion of electoral votes from the count because of the failure of a State to settle disputes as to the lawful vote of the State.” Stephen A. Siegel, *The Conscientious Congressman’s Guide to the Electoral Count Act of 1887*, 56 Fla. L. Rev. 541, 593 (2004) (quoting 18 Cong. Rec. 50 (1886)) (cleaned up).

<sup>17</sup> Congress may reject a state’s electoral votes if they have not been “regularly given by electors” or made by electors who had not been “lawfully certified” pursuant to Title 3, United States Code, Section 6. 3 U.S.C. § 15. The Electors do not mention the possibility that Congress may receive more than one set of electoral votes from Minnesota. The prospect of Minnesota losing its representation under such a scenario is highly conjectural. 3 U.S.C. § 15. *See generally* Siegel, *The Conscientious Congressman’s Guide*, 56 Fla. L. Rev. at 625–34 (discussing the process Congress uses when it receives more than one set of electoral votes from a state).



Furthermore, the attenuated line of causation on which this theory relies makes it an inappropriate basis for standing. The links in a chain between Secretary Simon entering into the Consent Decree and the prospect of Minnesota running afoul of the safe harbor provision are myriad. First, someone with standing would have to file a lawsuit challenging the election results. Next, the litigation would have to extend past the safe harbor deadline of December 8. It is sheer conjecture that such a circumstance would occur. Then, as mentioned above, even if Minnesota's election results were not certified by the safe harbor deadline, both Houses of Congress would have to affirmatively decide to disregard Minnesota's electoral votes on one of two narrow bases, something which has—as best the Court can tell—happened in only one election since the United States' first presidential election approximately 230 years ago.<sup>18</sup> The Electors have not plausibly alleged that any of these events will come to pass. In sum, this claimed injury relies on an attenuated and speculative chain of causation, and cannot be the basis for standing.

#### 4. *Candidacy Supporting Injury*

The Electors' final argument is that they have standing by virtue of being candidates for the position of presidential elector. (Reply at 13.) This theory is distinct

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<sup>18</sup>In 1873, Congress rejected the electoral votes of Georgia, Louisiana, and Arkansas. Siegel, *The Conscientious Congressman's Guide*, 56 Fla. L. Rev. at 553–54. Georgia's electors had voted for a candidate who could not be president, Louisiana's electors lacked proper credentials, and Arkansas had not held a lawful election. *Id.* at 554. Here, the Electors provide no evidence suggesting that any similar circumstances will occur this year. Further, Congress's rejections occurred prior to the enactment of the Electoral Count Act of 1887, which still governs electoral voting today. 3 U.S.C. § 1, *et seq.*

from the safe harbor and vote dilution theories in that the Electors claim that their candidacy gives them a “direct and personal stake in the conduct of their election consistent with governing federal law and . . . Article II’s Presidential Electors Clause.” (*Id.*) The Electors claim that they will be “injured by the tallying of votes for their opponents in violation of federal law.” (*Id.* at 15.)

The Electors cite three cases in support of the idea that candidates for office have standing in these circumstances: *McPherson*; *Bush v. Palm Beach County*; and *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98 (2000). None of these three cases supports the Electors’ argument. In *McPherson*, the plaintiffs were candidates to serve as presidential electors. 146 U.S. 1. Although the Supreme Court permitted the plaintiffs to bring the lawsuit, it did not address the issue of standing. The Court considered the issue of justiciability, but only as to whether the issue was a political question, not whether the plaintiffs had standing. *Id.* at 24 (“The question of the validity of this act . . . is a judicial question, and we cannot decline the exercise of our jurisdiction upon the inadmissible suggestion that action might be taken by political agencies in disregard of the judgment of [the Court].”). Further, *McPherson* preceded the development of the standing doctrine by approximately 30 years, and therefore cannot be relied upon to establish standing today. See *Fairchild*, 258 U.S. at 129–30 (holding that a plaintiff could not challenge the enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment because the challenge was “not a case, within the meaning of section 2 of article 3 of the Constitution, which confers judicial power on the federal

courts”); *Mellon*, 262 U.S. at 480–89 (dismissing a challenge to a law providing funding for maternity and child care “for want of jurisdiction” because a taxpayer lacked a sufficient interest in the use of federal funds to support a lawsuit); 13A Charles Alan Wright & Arthur R. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure* § 3531.1 (3d ed. 2020) (discussing the historical evolution of the modern standing doctrine as beginning with *Mellon*).

*Palm Beach County* and *Bush v. Gore* also fail to support the Electors’ argument. Both cases involved post-election litigation with tangible, concrete harms, not vague, pre-election concerns over the possibility of post-election litigation asserted here. A county canvassing board, the Democratic Party of Florida, and presidential candidate Al Gore initially brought the lawsuit that became *Palm Beach County*. See *McDermott v. Harris*, No. 00-2700, 2000 WL 1693713 (Fla. Cir. Ct. Nov. 14, 2000). Gore was also the plaintiff in *Bush v. Gore*. See *Gore v. Harris*, No. 00-2808, 2000 WL 1770257 (Fla. Cir. Ct. Dec. 4, 2000). For purposes of standing, the critical distinction between this case and *Palm Beach County/Bush v. Gore* is that, in those two cases, Gore sued after the election, where he was initially declared the loser, and could point to a tangible injury: bad ballot-counting practices allegedly cost him the election. There, Florida canvassing boards had certified the election results and declared George W. Bush the winner of Florida’s electoral votes. See *Gore v. Harris*, 772 So. 2d 1243, 1247 (Fla. 2000). Gore contended that those results

included illegal votes and omitted legal votes, and that the number of votes in question could change the outcome of the election. *Id.*

In contrast, any injury the Electors have alleged they may suffer is, at this point, conjectural and hypothetical—it is not specific to them, and is not actual, imminent, or concrete. *Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 560. The Court cannot reasonably infer any nexus between the entry of the Consent Decree and a diminished likelihood of their service as presidential electors.

On the other hand, multiple scenarios demonstrate that counting ballots postmarked on or before Election Day but received afterwards will not inflict such harm. For instance, if the Minnesota popular vote ends in a landslide in favor of either party, where the number of absentee ballots received after Election Day is less than the difference between the winning and second-place candidates, the challenged ballots likely would not impact which set of electors would represent Minnesota, and the Electors would suffer no injury.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, it is equally possible that more of the challenged ballots will be cast in *favor* of the Electors' candidate;<sup>20</sup> in that case, the Electors

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<sup>19</sup> For example: Minnesota election officials receive 50,000 timely postmarked ballots after Election Day. Candidate A wins Minnesota's popular vote by 100,000 votes over Candidate B. Regardless of the contents of the late absentee ballots, Candidate A wins. In either circumstance, the Electors are not harmed because the outstanding absentee ballots cannot change the results of the election.

<sup>20</sup> The Electors have given the Court no reason to infer, much less conclude, that the challenged absentee ballots would tend to favor one candidate or the other. To the extent that such evidence could be produced, it is likely to be based on empirical evidence from

would benefit from ballots received after Election Day. The Electors' claim rests upon the implied assumption that counting absentee ballots received after Election Day will decide the election against their candidate. The Court cannot find standing in an implied and theoretical assumption.

***B. The Electors Also Lack Prudential Standing***

Even if the Electors had established Article III standing, they also lack prudential standing because they are asserting the rights of third parties—not their own. Apart from Article III standing, courts also decline to reach the merits of a case when the plaintiff lacks prudential standing.

As a general rule, a litigant may only assert his or her own rights, not the rights of others. *Craig v. Boren*, 429 U.S. 190, 193–94 (1976). The rule is not absolute, however, as there are circumstances in which a litigant has standing to assert the rights of another. *Kowalski*, 543 U.S. at 129–30. To satisfy this exception, a plaintiff first must have a “close relationship” with the party whose rights he or she seeks to assert. *Id.* at 130. The third party also must be hindered in some way that limits his or her own ability to assert those rights. *Id.*

Secretary Simon and the Alliance argue that the Electors assert claims of injury that the Minnesota Legislature and Congress suffered, not themselves. (ECF No. 35

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previous elections, none of which are necessarily generalizable to the current election, which is expected to see record participation in absentee voting due to the pandemic. (Mayer Decl. at 3; ECF No. 39-1, Ex. 26.)

(“Secretary’s Br.”) at 13–16; Intervenor’s Br. at 26–29.) The Court agrees. Regarding Count I, the Electors maintain that the Electors Clause delegates the power to select presidential electors to the state legislature only—a power it cannot delegate—and Secretary Simon usurped that power by entering into the Consent Decree. U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 2. But even if the Secretary’s actions were a usurpation of power and violated the Electors Clause, the Minnesota Legislature and Congress suffered the injury, not the Electors. Only a state legislature may bring a claim for a violation of the Elections Clause. *Corman*, 287 F. Supp. 3d at 573 (addressing U.S. Const. art. I, § 4, cl. 1). Because Elections Clause and the Electors Clause have “considerable similarity,” this same logic applies to the Electors Clause. *Ariz. State Leg.*, 576 U.S. at 839 (Roberts, C.J., dissenting).

As for Count II, the Electors claim that Secretary Simon, by entering into the Consent Decree, contravened an act of Congress setting Election Day. (Pl. Br. at 12–14.) Similar to Count I, if anyone was injured by Secretary Simon entering into the Consent Decree, it was Congress, not the Electors.

Finally, the exception to the rule against raising the rights of third parties does not apply here. First, no close relationship exists between the Electors and the Minnesota Legislature. Although Lucero is a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, the Electors do not argue, nor could the Court find, that this establishes a close relationship. *See Va. House of Delegates v. Bethune-Hill*, 139 S. Ct. 1945, 1953 (2019) (noting that individual legislators lack standing to assert the “institutional interests of a

legislature.”); *cf. Raines v. Byrd*, 521 U.S. 811, 829 (1997) (holding that individual Senators lacked standing to challenge an institutional injury to the Senate). Second, the Electors have not alleged that the Minnesota Legislature is in any way hindered in, or prevented from, protecting its own interests. Thus, the Electors have not established prudential standing.

In an attempt to avoid this conclusion, the Electors argue that their claims involve “the Constitution’s federalism provisions,” (Reply at 17), and therefore they have prudential standing under *Bond v. United States*, 564 U.S. 211 (2011). In *Bond*, the Supreme Court held that a litigant has prudential standing where she “challenge[s] a law enacted in contravention of constitutional principles of federalism.” *Id.* at 223–24. There, the criminal defendant had prudential standing because she was challenging a federal statute that infringed on the state’s police powers in contravention of the Tenth Amendment. *Id.* at 225.

The Electors’ reliance on *Bond* falls short because they do not allege a violation of the principles of federalism. The Constitution delegates certain authority to regulate presidential elections to the states. U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 2. The Electors allege violations of that authority, rather than powers reserved to the states under the Tenth Amendment. Indeed, as the Electors note, states have no inherent power regarding federal elections. *See Gonzalez v. Arizona*, 677 F.3d 383, 392 (9th Cir. 2012) (“In contrast to the Supremacy Clause, which addresses preemption in areas within the states’ historic

police powers, the Elections Clause affects only an area in which the states have no inherent or reserved power.”);<sup>21</sup> (Pl. Br. at 11 (“This power [to regulate presidential elections] is neither inherent no[r] preserved under the Tenth Amendment.”).) The Consent Decree did not invade any Minnesota interest that the Tenth Amendment protects and thus no federalism concerns are at play here that would make *Bond* relevant. Accordingly, *Bond* does not support a finding that the Electors have prudential standing.

For these reasons, the Court concludes that the Electors lack prudential standing to bring either of their claims.

## II. Other Issues

Standing is “a jurisdictional prerequisite that must be resolved before reaching the merits of a suit.” *City of Clarkson Valley v. Mineta*, 495 F.3d 567, 569 (8th Cir. 2007). Because the Court finds that the Electors do not have standing, the Court lacks jurisdiction and does not make any findings on the multitude of additional issues this case presents, such as: whether the Court should abstain under *Pennzoil Co. v. Texaco, Inc.*, 481 U.S. 1 (1987); whether the *Purcell* principle counsels against the Court issuing an injunction so close to the election, *Purcell v. Gonzalez*, 549 U.S. 1 (2006); whether this suit is an improper collateral attack on the State Court Order; and whether the Electors satisfy the factors a

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<sup>21</sup> Although *Gonzalez* addressed the Article I Elections Clause, the same logic applies to the Article II Electors Clause. *Ariz. State Leg.*, 576 U.S. at 839 (Roberts, C.J., dissenting).



court considers in connection with a motion for injunctive relief, *Dataphase Sys., Inc. v. C L Sys., Inc.*, 640 F.2d 109, 114 (8th Cir. 1981).

### CONCLUSION

Because the plaintiffs lack standing, the Court has no subject-matter jurisdiction and the motion for preliminary injunction is DENIED.

Dated: October 11, 2020

BY THE COURT:

s/Nancy E. Brasel  
Nancy E. Brasel  
United States District Judge

# EXHIBIT B

STATE OF MINNESOTA

DISTRICT COURT

COUNTY OF RAMSEY

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Case Type: Civil

Robert LaRose, Teresa Maples, Mary Sansom,  
Gary Severson, and Minnesota Alliance for Retired  
Americans,

Plaintiffs,

v.

Steve Simon, in his official capacity as Minnesota  
Secretary of State,

Defendant.

**STIPULATION AND PARTIAL  
CONSENT DECREE**

Court File No: 62-CV-20-3149

Plaintiffs Robert LaRose, Teresa Maples, Mary Sansom, Gary Severson, and Minnesota Alliance for Retired Americans, and Defendant Steve Simon (collectively, “the Parties”) stipulate to the following and request that this Court approve this Partial Consent Decree. This Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree is limited only to Plaintiffs’ claims as they pertain to the November 3, 2020 general election (“November General Election”) and is premised upon the current public health crisis facing Minnesota caused by the ongoing spread of the novel coronavirus.

**I.  
RECITALS**

**WHEREAS** on May 13, 2020, Plaintiffs filed a complaint against Defendant challenging the constitutionality and enforcement of Minnesota’s requirement that each mail-in ballot be witnessed by a registered Minnesota voter, a notary, or person otherwise authorized to administer oaths (“Witness Requirement”), Minn. Stat. §§ 203B.07, 204B.45, and 204B.46, and its requirement that ballots be received by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day if delivered by mail (the

“Election Day Receipt Deadline”), *id.* §§ 203B.08 subd. 3; 204B.45, and 204B.46, Minn. R. 8210.2200 subp. 1 and 8210.3000 (collectively, “Challenged Provisions”), in general and specifically during the ongoing public health crisis caused by the spread of the novel coronavirus;

**WHEREAS** among other relief requested, the Complaint seeks to enjoin enforcement of the Challenged Provisions during the November General Election due, in part, to the public health crisis caused by the spread of the novel coronavirus;

**WHEREAS** the coronavirus public health crisis is ongoing and Minnesota remains under “Stay Safe” Emergency Executive Order 20-74, which contemplates a phased reopening of Minnesota that continues to require social distancing and mandates that “[i]ndividuals engaging in activities outside of the home follow the requirements of [the Stay Safe Order and Minnesota Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”)] Guidelines,” Exec. Order 20-74 ¶ 6(a), and states that individuals “at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 . . . [are] strongly urged to stay at home or in their place of residence,” *id.* ¶4;

**WHEREAS** Minnesota remains under a peacetime emergency, declared by the governor, because the “COVID-19 pandemic continues to present an unprecedented and rapidly evolving challenge to our State,” Emergency Executive Order 20-78;

**WHEREAS** Minnesota is currently witnessing an increase in positive COVID-19 cases, Minnesota has had over 42,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with over 4,300 hospitalizations and over 1,500 fatalities, and current projections indicate that the coronavirus crisis will continue into the fall and well into the November General Election cycle;

**WHEREAS** cases continue to spread and climb across the country, and the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases recently warned that the country is still “knee-deep” in the first wave of the pandemic;

**WHEREAS** federal guidelines state “[e]veryone should avoid close contact” by “keeping distance from others,” CDC, Coronavirus Disease 2019: How to Protect Yourself & Others, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html> (last visited July 13, 2020), and advise that jurisdictions “offer alternative voting methods that minimize direct contact,” including “alternatives to in-person voting” such as absentee voting, CDC, Recommendations for Election Polling Locations: Interim guidance to prevent spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/election-polling-locations.html> (last visited July 13, 2020);

**WHEREAS** Minnesota is anticipated to be required to maintain social distancing and abide by CDC Guidelines until the crisis subsides;

**WHEREAS** the absentee voting period for the November General Election begins on September 18, 2020, 46 days prior to the date of the election, Minn. Stat. § 203B.081 subd.1; *id.* § 204B.35, and absentee instructions, ballots, and envelopes, including the certificate of eligibility, must be prepared in time to have a supply for every precinct available to cover absentee voting prior to that date;

**WHEREAS** available public data regarding transmission of COVID-19 supports Plaintiffs’ concerns for their safety if they are required to interact with others to cast their ballot in the November General Election;

**WHEREAS** anticipated increases in absentee balloting are already being observed for the August 11, 2020 Primary Election and will continue in the November General Election, and coupled with corresponding shortages of elections personnel and mail delays, appear likely to impact the November General Election and threaten to slow down the process of mailing and returning absentee ballots;

**WHEREAS** the delivery standards for the Postal Service, even in ordinary times contemplate, at a minimum, at least a week for ballots to be processed through the postal system and delivered to election officials, “State And Local Election Mail—User’s Guide,” United States Postal Service, January 2020, available at <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub632.pdf> (last visited, July 13, 2020);

**WHEREAS** the Office of Inspector General for the United States Postal Service has reported that states with absentee ballot request deadlines less than seven days before Election Day, including Minnesota, are at “high risk” of ballots “not being delivered, completed by voters, and returned to the election offices in time . . . due to the time required for election commissions to produce ballots and Postal Service delivery standards.” Office of Inspector General, U.S.P.S., Rpt. No. 20-235-R20, Timeliness of Ballot Mail in the Milwaukee Processing & Distribution Center Service Area 6-7 (2020), available at <https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/document-library-files/2020/20-235-R20.pdf> (last visited, July 13, 2020);

**WHEREAS** it was recently reported: “Mail deliveries could be delayed by a day or more under cost-cutting efforts being imposed by the new postmaster general. The plan eliminates overtime for hundreds of thousands of postal workers and says employees must adopt a ‘different mindset’ to ensure the Postal Service’s survival during the coronavirus pandemic.” Matthew Daly, *Mail delays likely as new postal boss pushes cost-cutting*, Mpls. Star Tribune (July 15, 2020);

**WHEREAS** on April 28, 2020, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services reported that 52 people who voted in person or worked the polls for Wisconsin’s April 7, 2020 primary election have tested positive for COVID-19 thus far;

**WHEREAS** courts in other states have enjoined those states from enforcing witness requirements, similar to Minnesota’s witness requirement, for primary elections this spring. *See Thomas v. Andino*, -- F. Supp. 3d --, 2020 WL 2617329 (D.S.C. May 25, 2020); *League of Women Voters of Va. v. Va. State Bd. of Elections*, -- F. Supp. 3d --, 2020 WL 2158249, at \*8 (W.D. Va. May 5, 2020) (“In our current era of social distancing—where not just Virginians, but all Americans, have been instructed to maintain a minimum of six feet from those outside their household—the burden [of the witness requirement] is substantial for a substantial and discrete class of Virginia’s electorate. During this pandemic, the witness requirement has become both too restrictive and not restrictive enough to effectively prevent voter fraud.”);

**WHEREAS** for the April 7, 2020 primary election in Wisconsin, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the implementation of a postmark rule, whereby ballots postmarked by Election Day could be counted as long as they were received within six days of Election Day, *Republican Nat’l Comm. v. Democratic Nat’l Comm.*, 140 S. Ct. 1205, 1207 (2020), and other courts have also enjoined Election Day Receipt Deadlines during the current public health crisis, *see Driscoll v. Stapleton*, No. DV 20-408, slip op. at 11 (Mont. Dist. Ct. May 22, 2020); *see also Republican Nat’l Comm.*, 140 S.Ct. at 1210 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting) (noting that, in Wisconsin, the “surge in absentee-ballot requests has overwhelmed election officials, who face a huge backlog in sending ballots”);

**WHEREAS** multiple courts have found that the pandemic requires or justifies changes to other aspects of states’ election laws, *see, e.g., People Not Politicians Oregon v. Clarno*, 20-cv-1053, 2020 WL 3960440 (D. Or. July 13, 2020); *Cooper v. Raffensperger*, -- F. Supp. 3d --, 20-cv-1312, 2020 WL 3892454 (N.D. Ga. July 9, 2020); *Reclaim Idaho v. Little*, 20-cv-268, 2020 WL 3892454 (D. Idaho June 26, 2020); *Libertarian Party of Ill. v. Pritzker*, 20-cv-2112, 2020 WL

1951687 (N.D. Ill. Apr. 23, 2020); *Paher v. Cegavske*, -- F. Supp. 3d --, 20-cv-243, 2020 WL 2089813 (D. Nev. Apr. 30, 2020);

**WHEREAS** the Parties agree that an expeditious resolution of this matter for the November General Election, in the manner contemplated by the terms of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, will limit confusion and increase certainty surrounding the November General Election, including in the days remaining before the September 18, 2020 deadline for absentee ballot preparation, and is in the best interests of the health, safety, and constitutional rights of the citizens of Minnesota, and, therefore, in the public interest;

**WHEREAS** the Parties wish to avoid the burden and expense of litigation over an expedited preliminary injunction for the November General Election;

**WHEREAS** the Parties, in agreeing to these terms, acting by and through their counsel, have engaged in arms' length negotiations, and both Parties are represented by counsel knowledgeable in this area of the law;

**WHEREAS**, on June 17, 2020, this Court signed and approved a stipulation and partial consent decree implementing substantially similar relief for the August 11, 2020 primary election;

**WHEREAS** voters have been informed about the rule changes for the primary election, voting has begun with those rules in place, and it would minimize confusion to have consistent rules regarding how elections are conducted during this pandemic;

**WHEREAS** it is the finding of this Court, made on the pleadings and upon agreement of the Parties, that: (i) the requirements of the Minnesota Constitution, Art. I, §§ 2, 7, and Art. VII, § 1, and U.S. Constitution, Amend. I and XIV, will be carried out by the implementation of this Partial Consent Decree, (ii) the terms of this Partial Consent Decree constitute a fair and equitable settlement of the issues raised with respect to the November General Election, (iii) this Partial



Consent Decree is intended to and does resolve Plaintiffs' claims with respect to the November General Election; and (iv) this Partial Consent Decree is not intended to and does resolve Plaintiffs' claims generally or with respect to any election held after the November General Election;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, upon consent of the Parties, in consideration of the mutual promises and recitals contained in this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, including relinquishment of certain legal rights, the Parties agree as follows:

## **II. JURISDICTION**

This Court has jurisdiction over the subject matter of this action pursuant to Minn. Const. Art. VI, § 3 and Minn. Stat. § 484.01 and has jurisdiction over the Parties herein. The Court shall retain jurisdiction of this Stipulation and Consent Decree for the duration of the term of this Partial Consent Decree for purposes of entering all orders, judgments, and decrees that may be necessary to implement and enforce compliance with the terms provided herein.

## **III. PARTIES**

This Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree applies to and is binding upon the following parties:

- A. The State of Minnesota by Steve Simon, Secretary of State of Minnesota; and
- B. All Plaintiffs.

## **IV. SCOPE OF CONSENT DECREE**

A. This Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree constitutes a partial settlement and resolution of Plaintiffs' claims against Defendant pending in this Lawsuit. Plaintiffs recognize that by signing this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, they are releasing any claims under the Minnesota or U.S. Constitutions that they might have against Defendant with respect to the

Witness Requirement and Election Day Receipt Deadline in the November General Election. Plaintiffs' release of claims will become final upon the effective date of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree.

B. The Parties to this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree acknowledge that this does not resolve or purport to resolve any claims pertaining to the constitutionality or enforcement of the Witness Requirement and Election Day Receipt Deadline for elections held after the November General Election. Neither Party releases any claims or defenses with respect to the Witness Requirement and Election Day Receipt Deadline related to elections occurring after the November General Election.

C. The Parties to this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree further acknowledge that by signing this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, the Parties do not release or waive the following: (i) any rights, claims, or defenses that are based on any events that occur after they sign this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, (ii) any claims or defenses that are unrelated to the allegations filed by Plaintiffs in this Lawsuit, and (iii) any right to institute legal action for the purpose of enforcing this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree or defenses thereto.

D. By entering this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, Plaintiffs are partially settling a disputed matter between themselves and Defendant. The Parties are entering this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree for the purpose of resolving a disputed claim, avoiding the burdens and costs associated with the costs of a preliminary injunction motion and hearing, and ensuring both safety and certainty in advance of the November General Election. Nothing in this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree constitutes an admission by any party of liability or wrongdoing. The Parties acknowledge that a court may seek to consider this Stipulation and Partial

Consent Decree, including the violations alleged in Plaintiffs' Complaint, in a future proceeding distinct from this Lawsuit.

**V.  
CONSENT DECREE OBJECTIVES**

In addition to partially settling the claims of the Parties, the objective of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree is to ensure that Minnesota voters can safely and constitutionally exercise the franchise in the November General Election, and to ensure that election officials have sufficient time to implement changes for the November General Election and educate voters about these changes before voting begins.

**VI.  
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED FOR THE REASONS  
STATED ABOVE THAT:**

A. For the November General Election Defendant shall not enforce the Witness Requirement, with respect to voting only, as set out in Minn. Stat. § 203B.07, subd. 3 (1) and (2), that each absentee ballot and designated mail ballot for voters previously registered in Minnesota be witnessed by a registered Minnesota voter, a notary, or person otherwise authorized to administer oaths, Minn. Stat. § 204B.45 - .46, and Minn. R. 8210.3000.

B. For the November General Election Defendant shall not enforce the Election Day Receipt Deadline for mail-in ballots, as set out in Minn. Stat. §§ 203B.08 subd. 3, 204B.45, and 204B.46 and Minn. R. 8210.2200 subp. 1, and 8210.3000, that ballots be received by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day if delivered by mail. Instead, the deadline set forth in paragraph VI.D below shall govern.

C. Defendant shall issue guidance instructing all relevant local election officials to count all absentee and designated mail ballots in the November General Election, as long as they are otherwise validly cast by voters who registered in Minnesota before casting their absentee or designated mail ballot. No witness signature will be required on those ballots.

D. Defendant shall issue guidance instructing all relevant local election officials to count all mail-in ballots in the November General Election that are otherwise validly cast and postmarked on or before Election Day but received by 8 p.m. within 5 business days of Election Day (i.e., seven calendar days, or one week). For the purposes of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, postmark shall refer to any type of imprint applied by the United States Postal Service to indicate the location and date the Postal Service accepts custody of a piece of mail, including bar codes, circular stamps, or other tracking marks. Where a ballot does not bear a postmark date, the election official reviewing the ballot should presume that it was mailed on or before Election Day unless the preponderance of the evidence demonstrates it was mailed after Election Day.

E. Defendant shall issue instructions to include with all absentee ballots and designated mail ballots—or issue guidance instructing all relevant local election officials to modify, amend, or print the instructions accompanying each absentee ballot and designated mail ballot—to inform voters that any absentee ballot or designated mail ballot cast by a previously registered voter in the November General Election without a witness signature will not be rejected on that basis and that the witness signature line and associated language for witnesses to certify a previously registered voter's ballot, Minn. Stat. §§ 203B.07, subd. 3 (1) and (2), 204B.45, 204B.46; Minn. R. 8210.2200, subp.1; Minn. R. 8210.3000, be removed from the certification of

eligibility altogether for absentee ballot and designated mail ballot materials sent to previously registered voters.

F. Defendant shall issue instructions to include with all absentee and designated mail ballots—or issue guidance instructing all relevant local election officials to modify, amend, or print instructions accompanying each absentee and designated mail ballot—to inform voters that any absentee or designated mail ballot cast in the November General Election and postmarked on or before Election Day and received by 8 p.m. within 5 business days of Election Day (i.e., seven calendar days, or one week) will be counted.

G. Defendant shall take additional reasonable steps to inform the public that the Witness Requirement for voting will not be enforced for the November General Election and issue guidance instructing all relevant city and county election officials to do the same.

H. Defendant shall take additional reasonable steps to inform the public that the Election Day Receipt Deadline will not be enforced for the November General Election and that any absentee or designated mail ballot cast in the November General Election and postmarked on or before Election Day and received by 8 p.m. within 5 business days of Election Day (i.e., seven calendar days, or one week) will be counted.

I. Plaintiffs will withdraw their Motion for Temporary Injunction for the November General Election, filed on July 2, 2020, and will not file any further motions for injunctive relief for the November General Election based on the claims raised in their Complaint of May 13, 2020.

J. In accordance with the terms of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, the Parties shall each bear their own fees, expenses, and costs incurred as of the date of this Order with respect to Plaintiffs' claims raised as to the November General Election against Defendant.

## VII. ENFORCEMENT AND RESERVATION OF REMEDIES

The Parties to this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree may request relief from this Court if issues arise concerning the interpretation of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree that cannot be resolved through the process described below. This Court specifically retains continuing jurisdiction over the subject matter hereof and the Parties hereto for the purposes of interpreting, enforcing, or modifying the terms of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, or for granting any other relief not inconsistent with the terms of this Partial Consent Decree, until this Partial Consent Decree is terminated. The Parties may apply to this Court for any orders or other relief necessary to construe or effectuate this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree or seek informal conferences for direction as may be appropriate. The Parties shall attempt to meet and confer regarding any dispute prior to seeking relief from the Court.

If either Party believes that the other has not complied with the requirements of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, it shall notify the other Party of its noncompliance by emailing the Party's counsel. Notice shall be given at least one business day prior to initiating any action or filing any motion with the Court.

The Parties specifically reserve their right to seek recovery of their litigation costs and expenses arising from any violation of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree that requires either Party to file a motion with this Court for enforcement of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree.

## VIII. GENERAL TERMS

**A. Voluntary Agreement.** The Parties acknowledge that no person has exerted undue pressure on them to sign this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree. Each Party is voluntarily

choosing to enter into this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree because of the benefits that are provided under the agreement. The Parties acknowledge that they have read and understand the terms of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree; they have been represented by legal counsel or had the opportunity to obtain legal counsel; and they are voluntarily entering into this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree to resolve the dispute among them.

**B. Severability.** The provisions of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree shall be severable, and should any provisions be declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to be unenforceable, the remaining provisions of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree shall remain in full force and effect.

**C. Agreement.** This Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree is binding. The Parties acknowledge that they have been advised that (i) the other Party has no duty to protect their interest or provide them with information about their legal rights, (ii) signing this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree may adversely affect their legal rights, and (iii) they should consult an attorney before signing this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree if they are uncertain of their rights.

**D. Entire Agreement.** This Stipulation and Consent Decree constitutes the entire agreement between the Parties relating to the constitutionality and enforcement of the Witness Requirement and Election Day Receipt Deadline as they pertain to the November General Election. No Party has relied upon any statements, promises, or representations that are not stated in this document. No changes to this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree are valid unless they are in writing, identified as an amendment to this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree, and signed by all Parties. There are no inducements or representations leading to the execution of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree except as herein explicitly contained.

**E. Warranty.** The persons signing this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree warrant that they have full authority to enter this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree on behalf of the Party each represents, and that this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree is valid and enforceable as to that Party.

**F. Counterparts.** This Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree may be executed in multiple counterparts, which shall be construed together as if one instrument. Any Party shall be entitled to rely on an electronic or facsimile copy of a signature as if it were an original.


**G. Effective Date.** This Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree is effective upon the date it is entered by the Court. Defendant agrees to continue to initiate and implement all activities necessary to comply with the provisions of this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree pending entry by the Court.

## **IX. TERMINATION**

This Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree shall remain in effect through the certification of ballots for the November General Election. The Court shall retain jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the Partial Consent Decree for the duration of this Partial Consent Decree. This Court's jurisdiction over this Stipulation and Partial Consent Decree shall automatically terminate after the certification of all ballots for the November General Election.

**THE PARTIES ENTER INTO AND APPROVE THIS STIPULATION AND PARTIAL CONSENT DECREE AND SUBMIT IT TO THE COURT SO THAT IT MAY BE APPROVED AND ENTERED. THE PARTIES HAVE CAUSED THIS STIPULATION AND CONSENT DECREE TO BE SIGNED ON THE DATES OPPOSITE THEIR SIGNATURES.**



**SECRETARY OF STATE OF MINNESOTA**Dated: July 17, 2020By:   
Steve Simon  
Secretary of State**GREENE ESPEL PLLP**Dated: July 17, 2020By: /s/ Sybil L. Dunlop  
Sybil L. Dunlop (Reg. No. 390186)  
Samuel J. Clark (Reg. No. 388955)  
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\*Admitted pro hac vice

*Attorneys for Plaintiffs*

**IT IS SO DECREED AND ORDERED. JUDGMENT SHALL BE ENTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOREGOING CONSENT DECREE.**

Dated: August 3, 2020



Grewing, Sara (Judge)  
Aug 3 2020 3:05 PM

The Honorable Judge Sara Grewing  
Judge of District Court