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BOARD OF ELECTIONS ADDRESSES CONCERNS ON EARLY VOTING

With several challenges to candidates for the March 20 primary election still active in court, questions have arisen about the status of early voting, which begins Feb. 8.

With those questions in mind, Illinois State Board of Elections Executive Director Steven Sandvoss reached out to county clerks and boards of elections statewide:

“It has come to our attention that several Election Authorities will not be commencing Early Voting on the statutory starting date. As you are aware, under 10 ILCS 5/19A-15(a), the period for Early Voting commences on Thursday, February 8, 2018.

“We strongly encourage you to offer Early Voting in a timely manner to those voters who wish to make use of this option, based upon the most recent amended ballot certification issued Monday, Feb. 5 2018.

“We understand that there are some electoral board matters still working their way through the courts, and it is possible that further amendments to the certification may occur. To the extent that you will not be in a position to commence Early Voting on February 8, either on advice of counsel or other reasons, please advise us of that fact, and let us know when you anticipate the commencement of Early Voting in your jurisdiction.”

While the Illinois Election Code grants the Illinois State Board of Elections “general supervision over the administration of the registration and election laws throughout the State,” the board does not have the authority to either compel the state’s 109 local election authorities to begin early voting on the statutorily required date or grant permission to delay early voting.

The state board of elections certified the 2018 General Primary Election ballot at its Jan. 11 meeting and has amended the certification twice since then as a result of court rulings on candidate challenges. Should candidates now involved in appeals proceedings be added to or removed from the ballot, the board will amend the ballot certification accordingly. In that event, some election authorities may have to reprint ballots and reprogram their voting systems accordingly.

Candidates still involved in ballot challenges involving the Illinois State Board of Elections are Scott Drury (Democrat for attorney general), Hal Patton (Republican, 56th Illinois Senate district), Vandana Jhingan (Republican, 8th Congressional district) and Clifton Graham, Jr. (38th Illinois House district).