

November 16, 2023

Peoria County Election Commission  
4422 Brandywine Dr, STE 1  
Peoria, IL 61614

CC: Peoria City Council  
Peoria County Board

Dear Peoria County Election Commission:

The undersigned organizations strongly urge you to reverse the recent decision to stop providing prepaid postage for mail-in ballots starting in 2023. This policy change poses unnecessary barriers that could prevent eligible voters in Peoria County from fully participating in our democracy.

While we understand the Commission's rationale around potential cost savings, we believe this change fundamentally undermines voter accessibility and inclusion. Currently, 19 states and Washington D.C. require local election officials to supply prepaid return postage on mail-in ballots.

However, Illinois does not have such a requirement. Requiring voters to provide their postage creates a financial burden and deterrent, especially for low-income residents, seniors on fixed incomes, and voters with disabilities. The estimated \$14,000 - \$18,000 savings per election are minor compared to the civic imperative of removing obstacles to voting.

Elections should facilitate voter participation, not limit it. We are deeply concerned that this policy amounts to a "poll tax" requiring citizens to pay simply to exercise their right to vote. As public stewards, we urge you to avoid any action that could disenfranchise voters or put participation behind cost savings.

A healthy democracy depends on equitable participation. As public servants, we implore you to uphold that vision by reinstating prepaid return postage for mail-in ballots. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

| <b>Title</b>         | <b>First Name</b> | <b>Last Name</b> | <b>Organization</b>                       | <b># of Members</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|---|---------------------|
| VP of Communications | Nicole            | Morrow           | Peoria Proud                              | 100                 |
| President            | Marvin            | Hightower        | NAACP Peoria Branch                       | 200                 |
|                      | Kristen           | Meierkord        | ACLU-PEORIA                               | 21                  |
| President            | Connie            | Romanus          | League of Women Voters Greater Peoria     | 120                 |
| President            | Amy               | Orwig            | PFLAG Peoria                              | 468                 |
| Rev.                 | Tony              | Pierce           | Heaven's View Christian Fellowship Church | 200                 |
| CEO                  | Ryan              | Hidden           | Change Peoria                             | 1594                |
|                      | Sage              | Peterson         | River City Rainbow Collective             | 120                 |
|                      | Mariel            | Parrish          | Acorn Equality Fund                       | 9                   |
| Organization leader  | Lissa             | Califf           | Peoria TransGender Society                | 50                  |
| Co-President         | Heather           | McMeekan         | Peoria IL NOW                             | 100                 |
| Operations Manager   | Morgan            | Mullen           | Peoria Guild of Black Artists             | 25                  |