



December 29, 2017

Michelle Tassinari  
Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Elections Division, Room 1705  
One Ashburton Place  
Boston, MA 02108

Attention: Michelle Tassinari ([Michelle.Tassinari@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:Michelle.Tassinari@sec.state.ma.us))

Dear Ms. Tassinari:

Secretary of State William Galvin announced on December 22 that he is seeking public comments on the appropriate date for the September 2018 primary election, given that the seventh Tuesday before the general election, September 18, coincides with the start of the Jewish observance of Yom Kippur, and the prior Tuesday, September 11, coincides with Rosh Hashanah.

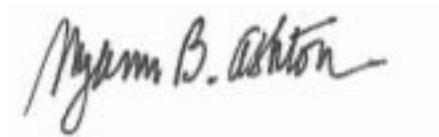
While there are no easy answers to choosing the best day, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts leans toward selecting either Thursday, September 13 or Thursday, September 20. We would prefer that the date be set as late as possible in the month to allow plenty of time for voters to learn about the candidates and issues after the summer vacation season has ended. Although turnout has been lower in the years when the primary election occurred on a Thursday (2012, 2016), it's hard to tease out whether the turnout was lower because of which races were contested on the ballot or when the voting occurred.

We would recommend that whichever date you choose, you do so as soon as possible and allocate resources to a vigorous public awareness campaign to make sure that voters know when the vote is occurring, and the availability of absentee voting should they be traveling midweek in September.

We would also emphasize that this situation is a perfect example of why the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Legislature should expand early voting for at least all statewide elections, including primaries. The availability of early voting would allow the Commonwealth to continue with this primary as is routine on September 18 while allowing ample opportunity for those observing the Jewish holidays to vote in advance.

Finally, we were disappointed that the announcement of the comment period was made on December 22 (the last workday before the Christmas holiday) and that the hearing and comments deadline is January 2 (the first workday back for many families after the holiday break). At the very least, we encourage you to extend the comment period until mid-January to give everyone an ample opportunity to comment.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Ann Ashton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Mary Ann Ashton  
President  
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts