September 11, 2020

The Honorable Mark R. Warner  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Warner:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the pressing need to recruit additional poll workers for the election in November and encouraging the awarding of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credit for attorneys who serve in this capacity.

Like you, the American Bar Association recognizes the need to ensure an adequate number of poll workers this November and the unique challenges presented by the pandemic. We agree that lawyers are ideally suited to serve as poll workers. While the ABA does not have the authority to designate CLE credit in state jurisdictions, I did want to share with you some of our efforts to encourage lawyers, law students, and other legal professionals to volunteer for this essential duty for the general election.

The ABA is partnering with the National Association of Secretaries of State and the National Association of State Election Directors on an initiative – Poll Worker, Esq. – to recruit and mobilize lawyers to assist as poll workers. Led by our Standing Committee on Election Law, the ABA has established a website – ambar.org/vote – which includes a video that encourages lawyers and law students to become poll workers and explains how to sign up as a poll worker. We recently launched a social media campaign that will run through September on the ABA’s Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts, with the hashtag #PollWorkerEsq. We are encouraging our members to share this information broadly and are reaching out to state and local bars, affinity bar associations, and other legal organizations to help promote this effort.

We believe that soon-to-be lawyers also can play an important role. Last week, I sent a communication to the deans of the more than 200 ABA-accredited law schools to encourage them to provide information to their law students, faculty, and staff on the opportunity to serve their communities as poll workers. With over 100,000 law students located around the country, we hope that this initiative will have a significant impact.

The ABA has longstanding policy encouraging law firms and other legal employers to allow time spent by lawyers as official poll workers to qualify as community service or voluntary public service hours and for non-lawyer staff to be allowed paid leave to serve as official poll workers. We are hopeful this will help increase the number of such persons that are able to participate as poll workers this year as well.
Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy and all people eligible to vote should be able to do so easily, safely and securely. Ensuring that all jurisdictions have an adequate number of poll workers is essential to that goal and the ABA and its members will continue to do our part. I am pleased to be personally joining the effort as a poll worker in Arizona.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please don’t hesitate to let me know. Thank you, again, for your efforts on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Patricia Lee Refo
President