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Eric Olsen

Press Statement: Address of Misleading 3rd Party Voter Information Flyer
Released: Friday, October 6, 2023

A recent flyer distributed by an organization called Virginia Voter Assistance (NOT a government entity) has caused confusion to many by “warning” of a pending “deadline” that may result in the loss of certain rights/benefits if a person does not vote. Many voters have called and emailed our office with concerns and complaints about this messaging.

The decision to vote in any election is a personal choice left up to each voter, not a requirement to receive Social Security benefits or keep the custody of your child. The direct result of voting is very simple - selecting the public officials that you want to represent your community on important issues.

The message conveyed by this organization could have been accomplished without confusing or upsetting voters, but they specifically chose not to do that. How do we know this? They told us themselves when their Executive Director stated, “we don’t really care about blowback.” As the Director of Elections for more than 300,000 voters, I have to care.

Our office reached out to the group that sent these flyers and relayed the concerns expressed by our voters. We have answered questions from the media regarding the misleading information many of you have reported. We have contacted the Commonwealth’s Attorney and other government agencies regarding the matter. Many counties and media outlets have identified this information as false and/or misleading, and the reactions of voters confirm this.

We wholeheartedly encourage everyone qualified to get registered and vote. It’s what we help people do every single day. The work of running accurate elections and keeping the public informed is completed by hard-working, enthusiastic professionals who live in your community. Voters should seek out official information channels like pwcvotes.org or call us at 703-792-6470. Our dedicated staff are ready and willing to assist you.

The decision of any qualified person to vote or not is entirely up to them. Any attempt to needlessly confuse or scare voters into thinking otherwise is unnecessary. With early voting, mail voting, and Election Day, there are more options than ever to exercise that right. We hope you participate in this process, and we are proud to assist ANYONE looking to register or vote.

However, should you decide not to vote, you can make that choice knowing that no government official is going to show up at your house the following week to revoke your medical coverage, seize your assets, or take your family pet as a result. That is not how voting works, and we would counsel organizations to be considerate and careful in how they message voters.

Eric Olsen,
Director of Elections, Prince William County