



## Government

# Prudential Center to Serve as 'Super' Polling Site for 2020 Presidential Election

By M.E. CAGNASSOLA

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NEWARK, NJ — As cities nationwide gear up for what might arguably be one of the most important presidential elections in United States history, Newark and its corporate partners are joining forces to ensure voting access.

Mayor Ras Baraka said at a virtual press conference Monday that thanks to a partnership between Essex County, the New Jersey Devils, Prudential Center and the National Basketball Players Associations (NBPA), the Prudential Center will act as a "super" polling site this November.

The undertaking is awaiting a final seal of approval from the Essex County Board of Elections but is expected to move forward. Linda Von Nessi, clerk for the board, said the county will be doing a voter registration drive and census event on Sept. 22 at Prudential, where voters can pick up mail-in ballots if they have not received theirs in the mail.

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A drop box for mail-in ballots will also be provided outside the arena, which is able to accommodate nearly 20,000 people. Officials said the site can fit more voting districts and allow for social distancing and crowd control during voting. The Essex County Board of Elections will have a satellite office to process ballots.

"Regarding our election day polling place, we plan to have six to eight voting booths from the city of Newark," Von Nessi said. "It's going to be an exciting experience. We did our walkthrough, and I have to say that everyone at Prudential Center was more than accommodating, and we're really looking forward to the operations."

While the upcoming presidential election in New Jersey is expected to be mostly vote-by-mail, Mayor Ras Baraka, joined by New Jersey Secretary of State Tahesha Way, said they are providing safe in-person voting options on Nov. 3 as well as a place for residents to register to vote, cast early ballots and apply for mail-in ballots.

President Donald Trump, who has vehemently opposed vote-by-mail, has repeatedly spread fear about the integrity of mail-in voting and the U.S. election system. Baraka said there is no evidence that the voting process is fraudulent through the mail, and that absentee voting is nothing new.

"This, if anything, makes it easier. It gives people access to come in and make sure that they have a secure place to drop their vote, or if they want to do it the regular way, they should be able to come in and do it at a place that's similar to the voting poll sites," he said. "This is a great opportunity to get that done."

Prudential is easily accessible to many of the city's buildings where seniors live, Baraka added, and officials hope its central location will encourage more people to vote. Parking will be free on election day.

Way added that the state wants to give voters a choice and make it easier and accessible to every voter.

"The Prudential Center will allow for that and also include the elements of social distancing, which we need at this time with the pandemic," she said.

Voters can participate in the voter registration and 2020 Census event on Tuesday, Sept. 22 by going to Prudential's main floor. On Election Day, Nov. 3, voters can park at 15 Lafayette St. and cast their ballots between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. at the arena.

Voters looking to vote early, drop off their ballots, apply for a mail-in ballot or find more information can visit [prucenter.com/vote](https://prucenter.com/vote). Voters casting ballots by mail must remember to vote, sign, seal and return their ballots.

"Ahead of the upcoming election, we are proud to partner with the City of Newark and New Jersey to make the Prudential Center available as a safe, easily accessible option in our community to exercise their right to vote," said Josh Harris and David Blitzer, HE Managing Partners-New Jersey Devils and Prudential Center.

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Mail-in ballots will be sent out to voters between now and Oct. 5, and citizens have until Oct. 13 to registers to vote in the 2020 presidential election. This includes individuals on parole or probation without financial penalties or fines.