

**Brookfield City Attorney Disgraces Self; Calls Absentee Voting A "Privilege," Not A Right  
By Mark Belling, WISN-AM**

Brookfield's City Attorney, in defending his lazy City Clerk's refusal to allow the casting of absentee ballots at City Hall until next week, ripped a community constituent for requesting the opportunity to vote now, before the China Virus situation worsens.

The city attorney, Jenna Merten, in an email below not only defends Brookfield's decision to be one of a minority of Waukesha County communities to ban voting this week, but then told the resident that absentee voting is not a "right" but a "privilege."

Merten is dead wrong about that. Wisconsin statutes specifically require all communities in the state to offer absentee voting. The state does not specify how much access must be given, because of a federal appeals court ruling, but makes clear that every municipality in the state must accept absentee ballots either in person or via mail. Below is a paste of the email Merten sent to the Brookfield resident. I have deleted the resident's name.

**[EXTERNAL] Fwd: FW: Early voting in Brookfield**

----- Forwarded message -----  
From: **Jenna Merten** <[merten@ci.brookfield.wi.us](mailto:merten@ci.brookfield.wi.us)>  
Date: Fri, Mar 20, 2020 at 10:27 AM  
Subject: FW: Early voting in Brookfield  
To: >  
Cc: Kelly Michaels <[michaels@ci.brookfield.wi.us](mailto:michaels@ci.brookfield.wi.us)>

The City of Brookfield has always offered in-person absentee voting for the two weeks prior to Election Day. Absentee voting is a privilege, not a right, and expanding our services during a global pandemic is not a prudent way to manage our employees, resources, and public health. Madison and Milwaukee have populations that far exceed that of the City of Brookfield; and the City has always been able to handle in-person voting during the two weeks prior to the election.

Voting is not unavailable to you. You may register to receive an absentee ballot by mail, and the City is actively encouraging doing so. Right now, that method is the safest way to protect the public health.  
<http://www.ci.brookfield.wi.us/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1723>

Sincerely,

Jenna Merten  
Brookfield City Attorney  
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Brookfield, WI 53005-5095  
262-787-3634  
[merten@ci.brookfield.wi.us](mailto:merten@ci.brookfield.wi.us)

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