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For immediate release

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Special edition of MPT’s Direct Connection focuses on 2020 election

One-hour program on October 26 examines COVID-19’s election impacts and other issues of concern to voters

OWINGS MILLS, MD – Maryland Public Television (MPT) presents a one-hour special edition of Direct Connection at 7 p.m. on Monday, October 26. MPT’s award-winning public affairs team, led by host Jeff Salkin together with correspondents Nancy Yamada and Sue Kopen, are joined by analysts to explore national and regional impacts of COVID-19 on the 2020 election, along with an in-depth discussion of national and regional issues of concern to Maryland voters.

The program will also livestream at mpt.org/live and be available for viewing following the broadcast at video.mpt.tv/show/direct-connection/.

The Direct Connection election special comprises six segments:

Segment 1
Reporter Nancy Yamada speaks to Nikki Charlson, deputy administrator at the MD State Board of Elections, about the board’s creative approaches to reach voters and how it is handling the increase in mail-in ballot requests. Yamada also interviews Howard County School Board candidate Sezin Palmer to learn how candidates have changed tactics to reach voters during the pandemic. Yamada then talks to voters who are taking a much closer look at candidates rather than simply voting along straight party lines.

Segment 2
Jeff Salkin is scheduled to interview David Garreis, deputy director, Anne Arundel County Board of Elections, and president of the Maryland Association of Election Officials about the use of early voting centers.
**Segment 3**
Salkin then interviews Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos, assistant professor, Division of Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, about steps citizens can take to vote safely in person.

**Segment 4**
Jeff Salkin next speaks with Kim Wehle, author of the book “What You Need to Know about Voting--and Why” about the pandemic’s impact on voting. Wehle is a professor of law at the University of Baltimore School of Law and a CBS News legal analyst.

**Segment 5**
Reporter Sue Kopen sheds light on major election issues, including the Supreme Court nomination battle, racial strife, unemployment, and fears of voter suppression. She interviews former Lt. Governor Michael Steele, the first African-American elected to statewide office in Maryland. Kopen then talks with Chris Frates, host of Sirius XM's "Politics Inside Out,” and also shares thoughts from average voters about election issues.

**Segment 6**
Jeff Salkin speaks with three guests to get their perspectives on the election -- John T. Bullock, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Political Science at Towson University who also serves as the 9th District councilman in Baltimore City; Mileah Kromer, Ph.D., founding director of the Goucher Poll and director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center; and Melissa Deckman, Ph.D., the Louis L. Goldstein Professor of Public Affairs and chair of the Political Science Department at Washington College and board chair of the Public Religion Research Institute.

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**About Maryland Public Television**
Maryland Public Television (MPT) is a statewide, public-supported TV network and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) affiliate, offering entertaining, informative, educational, and inspiring content delivered by traditional broadcasting and streaming on TVs, computers, and mobile devices. A state agency, it operates under the auspices of the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission. MPT creates and distributes local, regional, and national content and is a frequent winner of regional Emmy® Awards. MPT’s commitment to educators, parents, caregivers, and learners of all ages is delivered through instructional events and [Thinkport.org](http://Thinkport.org). MPT’s year-round community engagement activities connect viewers with resources on a wide range of topics. For more information visit [mpt.org](http://mpt.org).