

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the House of Representatives
FROM: Representative Eugene DePasquale
DATE: February 24, 2011
SUBJECT: Proposed Legislation – Election Reform Package

I will soon introduce a four-bill legislative package that will reform the Commonwealth's Election system to offer expanded voter choice and competition, improve access to voting for working Pennsylvanians and require corporate accountability as it relates to political donations.

The first bill is a reintroduction (previously HB 1672) and allows for an open Primary giving all voters a chance to vote in a primary, even if they are not registered with a political party. My legislation will not change how the two major party electors vote in primaries. Instead, my legislation would allow Independents and third-party voters the ability to choose a Primary they wish to participate.

The second bill would create the Corporate Accountability Act. Currently, following the Citizens United Supreme Court ruling, corporations can spend freely to influence a political campaign without the approval of shareholders. Further, the contributions are not made known to the shareholders or the public. My legislation will require corporations to obtain shareholder approval before contributing an annual aggregate sum exceeding \$10,000. It will make the contributions public knowledge and require proper notification to the shareholders.

Thirdly, I also plan to re-introduce legislation that would provide for early voting in Pennsylvania (previously HB 238). In the most recent election, thirty-two states and the District of Columbia permitted their citizens to vote prior to Election Day. Now is the time to give Pennsylvanians that same opportunity while, at the same time, place an end to long lines at the polls, which oftentimes cause voters to wait for extended periods of time. My legislation proposes that voting begin 15 days before Election Day and end on the second day before Election Day.

The final bill in the package would make general election competition among all parties a reality by equalizing the ability of Independent and Third-Party candidates to run for public office in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Voters' Choice Act (VCA) gives greater freedom of choice to the Pennsylvania voter by making it much less difficult for independent and third party candidates to get on the November ballot. The VCA changes the way a third party is legally defined. Instead of requiring a third party's existence to be determined by how well a Democrat or Republican did in the last election, under the Voters' Choice Act a third party would be legally recognized once it has at least 0.05% of the total number of voters in Pennsylvania registered in their party. This bill will remove the too-high barrier of third-parties and give General Election voters more choice and will strengthen competition.

If you would like to co-sponsor any of these bills please contact Cynthia Clory in my office at 717/787-7514 or cclory@pahouse.net.