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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
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MEMORANDUM

To: All House Members
From: Representative Tony Payton
Date: April 8, 2011
Re: No Excuse Absentee Ballots

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation that will eliminate the qualifications to vote by absentee ballot currently contained within 25 Pa.C.S. §3302.

Under current Pennsylvania law, a qualified elector may only vote by absentee ballot if he/she is unable to attend the polling place due to illness or physical disability, if they expect to be absent from the Commonwealth or municipality due to occupational duties, or due to observance of a religious holiday. While these requirements serve a legitimate purpose, many people cannot vote due to obligations other than those outlined in the law. As such, their right to vote is severely limited due to a lack of recourse. Therefore, I am proposing a remedy.

My legislation creates a concept called a "No Excuse Absentee Ballot." Under this practice, any qualified elector may cast an absentee ballot without a stated reason for invoking the option to vote in such manner. The procedure for obtaining an absentee ballot remains the same as provided under current law. Currently, 30 states and the District of Columbia allow for no excuse absentee voting. By providing this voting option to the electorate in Pennsylvania, we will be creating greater accessibility for voters, while increasing turnout and ensuring better representation.

Please join me in sponsoring this important legislation. If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, please contact Tajuanna Wallace in my office via email at twallace@pahouse.net or at 717-787-1354.