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Senate of Pennsylvania

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MEMORANDUM

TO: All Senators

FROM: Senator Anthony H. Williams

DATE: September 22, 2011

SUBJECT: Co-sponsorship of Legislation: **Open Primaries**

In the near future I will be introducing legislation that will provide for an open primary system in Pennsylvania. This legislation will allow any registered voter to cast a vote in a primary election, regardless of his or her political affiliation. For example, a Democrat would be able to vote in a Republican primary, or vice versa. Additionally, a registered independent or undeclared voter would be able to vote in a Democratic or Republican primary.

Under current law, only registered Democrats or Republicans may vote in that party's primary election and independent voters are not permitted to vote in either primary. Pennsylvania has roughly one million unregistered voters, which accounts for approximately 1/8 of the Commonwealth's voters. The open primary system is in effect in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Vermont and Wisconsin.

The purpose of this legislation is to give voters maximum flexibility by not binding them to a distinct political party. Open primaries will help to boost voter turnout and allow for the development of new coalitions of voters and candidates.

If you wish to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Donald Gordon, Esq., at 787-5970 or email dgordon@pasenate.com.