

Written Testimony
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
State Government Committee
October 4, 2016

Preparation

Preparations for the upcoming election of November 8 are in full swing in most counties. Voter registration work is at an all time high for many offices. The nature and candidates of the Presidential contest, along with the Department of State's efforts to make the process more accessible for the citizens of the Commonwealth, have propelled the number of new registrants and updates to new levels.

Counties are forging ahead in their preparation and delivery of absentee ballots by the tens of thousands. Although there are numerous voting systems employed by counties for elections, time limits are crucial to all. We have met, or will shortly meet, the go ahead day for balloting media preparation and subsequent testing including prescribed logic and accuracy testing. There is no turning back for most at this time.

Issues

As with each recent election, so it now appears, the largest issue we face is pending litigation in the upper courts. County election offices are well aware of the impact these cases have on election preparation. We have waited until the last day possible for a decision in these matters to begin media preparation and finalizing ballots. We must then mitigate any outfall from the decisions rendered by the courts. Case in point is the Vodvarka affair of the primary. He's off. Appeal. Media and ballots complete. He's on. Post signs. Write-ins. Not fun

The Pennsylvania Department of State has done a good job making accessibility the key to its online voter registration efforts and they are to be applauded for that effort. Couple their efforts with that of the contention of a Presidential election, and you have the makings for a landslide of work for county offices. Overtime and fatigue are now being felt by staff due to the overwhelming work load. Not to mention the monetary cost to complete everything on time.

The last issue has to do with the perception of the hacking of our voting systems nationwide. The Department of State has taken all precautions to safe guard the election integrity at all levels. We are assured the voter data base is secured statewide. The difficulty lies with the press and other media outlets not distinguishing properly between voter database or voter registration system versus actual voting computation systems.

Integrity

Counties adhere to best practices of voting system integrity as well as being compliant with state and federal guidelines and laws. To clarify: equipment is stored securely under lock and key with limited access to personnel. Precinct equipment is isolated from tabulation equipment. Media and voting equipment are only together on Election Day. None of the equipment is or has been introduced to the internet. Data transfer between tabulation equipment and the SURE portal is accomplished on virgin transfer devices. Poll workers are trained on their function only, with more complex accessibility left to trained technicians. Coding is generated and downloaded new, before each election. Testing of all facets of the elections is completed on both the precinct and tabulation functions. A proper chain of

custody is maintained for all equipment as delivered to the polling site. All polling place procedures are followed as prescribed in the code. At the close of the polls, all memory devices are transferred to the central tabulation area for count. Proper audit procedures are conducted post election day to test the vote count and update voter history.

No one has access to any equipment for a time period necessary to compromise the system. It would take a vast number of people to allow such an occurrence to "cover up" such a conspiracy. I have complete confidence in the knowledge, professionalism and dedication of the Department of State, County Directors and their staff, poll workers, and the myriad of other county employees and citizens.

Future Legislation

The County Election Directors, Election Reform Committee of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, and the Eastern and Western Associations of Election Personnel have adopted a threefold agenda moving Pennsylvania voting to a new level.

First, we seek the necessary legislative changes to increase the flexibility by which elections are to be delivered in the Commonwealth. New methods to Pennsylvania would include no excuse absentee balloting, vote centers, and vote by mail. The one size fits all precinct model detailed in the Code was written in 1937 with little change. Counties are running out of assets to employ this model of voting. It would only seem logical to allow the county itself to determine the method that is most cost effective and efficient for its residents. The current generation of voting equipment will be at the end of its life expectancy in the next several years. Now is the optimal time to make these crucial changes.

Second, counties do not have the wherewithal to purchase the next generation of voting equipment. Assistance from the Commonwealth and/or the Federal Government is paramount. Without the needed influx of capital, counties could very well be forced to return to 100% hand count and the delays in results that come with this antiquated system.

Last but certainly not least, changes to the election code are going to be necessary in order to continue to perpetuate the precinct model in the short run. These changes may include "drafting" judges of election and inspectors as opposed to electing them in municipal elections. Adjusting dates for filing petitions, applying for absentee ballots and returning voted absentee ballots, and establishing agreed upon drop dead dates for litigation affecting the ballot after a certain date are but to name just a few. This list is not all encompassing by any means but gives you the flavor of the ideas from election directors across the state.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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