

16 Aug 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

My name is Barbara B. Cross, I reside in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and my voting precinct is West Pennsboro Lower.

I was born and raised in Allegheny County, attended McKeesport Area Senior High School and graduated from then Chatham College for Women, now Chatham University in Pittsburgh. Upon graduation from College, I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps and served honorably for 25 years, both on Active Duty and within the Reserves.

These 25 years away from the Commonwealth afforded me a tremendous opportunity to live and learn in a variety of communities both domestic and foreign. Throughout this time, I continued to maintain where possible a Pennsylvania driver's license and participated when possible as a registered voter, requesting an absentee ballot. In retirement, Pennsylvania once again became my permanent home.

In my first role as an elected official, I was the Majority Inspector of my voting precinct. And while not a large precinct, voter turnout is usually rather high. Questions regarding procedures are directed to the Judge of elections for clarification. Most questions were not confrontational, but on occasion and certainly during a Primary Election, many individuals would present themselves to vote and be denied the ballot. When they learned through a lengthy explanation that they could not vote as an Independent in Pennsylvania, I made a mental inventory of their faces.

The residents were young, middle-aged and elderly men and women, and most certainly, there were those proudly wearing an Armed Forces hat identifying them as a Veteran. What was remarkable when they were told they could not vote and they had to leave: there wasn't shouting and chaos. There was simply sadness in their eyes and on their faces as they were turned away from the freedom that many of them as Veterans had given to all of us. The freedom to vote. What an embarrassment.

I was recalled to Active Duty for two years and resigned my position as Majority Inspector, in accordance with DOD 13144.10. This document outlines acceptable political behavior while on Active Duty and within the Reserves. It further defines political behavior that is not accepted or in violation of this Order. This Order is not intended to stifle anyone's vote. In fact, service members are assigned additional duties as a Voting Officer. Their duties are, but not limited to, ensuring that registration dates for each State are published and that spouses/partners are also provided voting information. This resource is to help service members vote; not tell them how to vote. Any political overture of the voter information is in direct violation of this Order.

It should then come as no surprise that a Veteran often registers as an Independent.

The Veteran's oath is to defend the Constitution, not a political party.

My second opportunity as an elected official came with my appointment and subsequent election as a County Commissioner. I took the oath of Office on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Within a few weeks, I was one of three Commissioners responsible for the May Primary.

I remembered my experiences as an Inspector of elections, and even with my years out of the Commonwealth, I found nothing had changed, the process was the same. Now I just got to see it happening within every precinct. Independents denied the opportunity to vote. How could I take pride in enforcing this?

As we all know, taxpayers pay for our elections. Whether you are registered to vote or not, regardless of your party, if you are paying taxes at the County level, a portion of those tax dollars are directed to the Bureau of Elections.

If a closed primary election is so crucial to the two major political parties, they should hold and fund their own elections during their respective State Conventions.

Only those elections open to all registered voters regardless of party should receive tax revenue.

Civic engagement, civic duty or public service has been a hallmark of my family for the past nine generations. In recent generations, my grandfather, my father and myself have all held an elected office. Growing up, the term *politics* would be used only when absolutely necessary, but the terms *government*, *public service*, and *duty* were conversation starters at our dining room table.

I was taught never to confuse government with politics. The government is what we who have put on a uniform have taken an oath to defend – and what my family has given their lives for. That commitment to protecting our government is why I'm here; not for politics or a particular party.

I fully understand that politics is how we make government work. However, I also believe government, public service, and the common good are far greater and far more important than politics. As a Commissioner, I never asked an individual's political status when they were presenting an idea that could save money or improve the lives of County residents.

No political party has a monopoly on a good idea, but embracing the good idea of repealing closed primaries brings both public servants and the common good together to better serve all Pennsylvanians.

Thank you