

Testimony of Jack Wagner:
Pennsylvania House State Government Committee Hearing on Repealing Closed Primaries
August 16, 2022

My name is Jack Wagner. I am the Founder and Chairman of the Board of Pittsburgh Hires Veterans, a nonprofit serving all veterans and active service members, including the National Guard and Reserves. We will serve any veteran whenever possible. We provide vocational rehabilitation; help prepare veterans for employment; and can help them with training and education goals

I myself proudly served our country as a Veteran of the United States Marine Corps. I am a Vietnam Veteran and a recipient of the Purple Heart. I devoted 28 years to public service: eight years as Pennsylvania's Auditor General, 10 years as a Pennsylvania State Senator and 10 years on Pittsburgh City Council before founding Pittsburgh Hires Veterans.

I strongly believe in repealing Pennsylvania's closed primary system, which disproportionately locks out our veteran population from fully exercising their fundamental right to vote. In my verbal testimony, I will address:

1. Our Enlistment Oath when joining the armed forces and what it means.
2. Pennsylvania as the 5th largest State with the 4th largest number of veterans. Let's be proud of who we are.
3. Why veterans are disproportionately registered Independent.
4. Veterans are a proud and righteous Group – yet we are denied the opportunity to vote 50% of the time.
5. Most elections are decided in the primary – shutting out Independents.
6. Communities of color lean independent – especially Asian and Hispanic voters.
7. Veterans appreciate values and traditions, especially when it comes to our democracy.
8. As a Commonwealth, are we moving forward or backward?

I thank the members of the Committee for the opportunity to address them here today.