



BUREAU OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS

1251 SOUTH 28th STREET
HARRISBURG, PA. 17111
(717) 780-6360
1-800-328-0058

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SEPTEMBER 14, 2022

**GERALD D. FEASER JR., DIRECTOR,
DAUPHIN COUNTY BUREAU OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS**

Good morning, Chairman Grove, Chairman Conklin and members of the Committee, and thank you for this opportunity to offer comments today.

First, I want to make clear that Act 88 of 2022 has enabled counties to be better prepared to meet the Legislature's – and, indeed, the general public's – expectations to have a clearer knowledge of vote totals on election night.

Following the changes implemented by Act 77 of 2019 which, among other things, allowed voters to take advantage of no-excuse mail-in voting, many counties struggled with the financial investment in personnel, needed equipment and space to manage what amounts to conducting two elections at the same time: in person voting at the precinct/polling places and the opening and scanning of mailed ballots.

While counties still may struggle with spacing limitations, this funding goes a long way toward covering personnel and equipment costs. Indeed, Dauphin County saws its election budget grow from \$1.1 million in 2019 to nearly \$2.7 million in 2020. Act 88 has provided Dauphin County with nearly \$985,000 for eligible uses. Combined with county taxpayer monies allocated for the Bureau of Registration and Elections, we are finally able to lean forward in preparing for elections rather than playing catch up.

CURRENT PREPARATIONS

On August 8, a week after the last day for third party candidates to file nomination papers, Dauphin County began to build the database for the November 8, 2022, General Election. Without a certified list of candidates from the primary, we based our ballot creation on those Democratic and Republican nominees who won the primary and drew from the Department of State's posted list of third-party candidates to complete the data entry.

We then spent the following three weeks refining, reviewing and proofreading the ballot to ensure accuracy and readability, as well as conducting testing on a sampling of the ADA-

compliant ballot marking devices used at the polling places, precinct-level scanners and central tabulation system.

On August 30, Dauphin County submitted to our election system vendor – ClearBallot – the ballots for the November 8, 2022, election to create a test deck.

On September 6, we received the test deck and submitted it to our ballot printer and ballot mail house for printing, and received it on Friday, September 9. This test deck enables us to ensure our central tabulation system and a sampling of our election day precinct scanners are reading ballots correctly. We will complete testing today, September 14.

Once all testing is complete and we are confident with the ballot layout, voting system programming and printing of ballots, we will send to our mail house the list of those nearly 20,000 Dauphin County voters who already have applied to receive an absentee or mail-in ballot. Based on this timing, voters can expect to start receiving their ballot in the mail the week of September 19. This also allows us to easily meet the federal law requiring us to issue ballots to UMOVA voters, who are our uniformed military and overseas voters, before the September 24 deadline.

With mailed ballots expected to hit voters' mailboxes next week, we will put out our ballot drop box at the Dauphin County Administration Building, where it is under 24-hour video surveillance, for those who wish to deliver their ballot to that location on Monday, September 26. We also will be able to begin over-the-counter ballot issuing the week of September 26.

On October 3, we will begin the public testing of all 324 ballot scanners that will be distributed to our 159 precincts, and re-test our central scanners. Once tested, the scanners will be set for election day and sealed.

On October 17, we will begin extending our regular office hours until 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, to afford voters who wish to apply over the counter for absentee or mail-in ballots, as well as return ballots they received in the mail to our office in person.

After 5 p.m. on November 1, which is the last day to apply for a mailed ballot, we will send the voter database to our poll book printer so that we can have those ready for Judges of Election to pick up – along with their other election day supplies – on Saturday, November 5.

Additionally, on November 1, November 3 and November 4, I will be conducting in person training for all Judges and Inspectors of Election, as well as other poll workers. Over the course of three days, we will hold eight classes and have nearly 700 of our 1,100 poll workers attend.

All of this leads up, of course, to election day on November 8.

As you can see from this timeline, it takes nearly one month to get in a position to where we can issue ballots to voters who have submitted an absentee or mail-in application. Any delays along the way, such as challenges to third party candidates or changes to ballot content, pushes back our ability to meet the expectations of voters. Once we get within 60 days of an election, any change complicates our ability to roll that change into the work at hand, especially once we have

moved past the initial testing of our ballot and voting systems, as we may be forced to go back to square one.

However, just so no one thinks county election officials only have the upcoming election on our radar, we are always looking down the road to the next election, the next year and beyond.

SURE-VOTE:

The Department of State is working to modernize Pennsylvania's electronic voter registration system, which has been referred to as SureVote. Dauphin County participated in the User Acceptance Testing of the Election Night Return component of SureVote, as well as the parallel testing for the May 2022 General Primary and the August Mock Election. What we have experienced so far has been positive. Using our election system vendor, ClearBallot, it will be easier to report our election night results to the state and will be more user-friendly for the public to review the election results.

We have not yet experienced the voter registration side of the new system, however from what we understand of its capabilities, we are looking forward to the new features and easing of administrative burdens that the legacy system can no longer keep up with. For one, the ability to geocode voters will allow for easier assignment of voters to the proper election districts and will allow for smoother redistricting processes. With all changes, there will be growing pains, but we look forward to the vast benefits that a new, modern voter registration system will bring.

2023 PREPARATIONS

In 2023, we will be holding a municipal primary and election. At present, we will be tasked with creating ballots that include state, county and local level members of the judiciary; county row offices, including County Commissioners; city, township and borough offices; and school directors. Such primary ballots normally bring larger than normal number of candidates from which voters can narrow the field for the November election.

However, we also face the prospect of attempting to find room on the ballot for – at present – up to six Constitutional amendments if all move forward in early 2023. For counties that must produce ballots in languages other than English, this may force election officials to create multiple page ballots.

Our election system can create ballots as large as 8.5 inches by 22 inches, printed two-sided, which is a far better solution to ensure proper ballot reconciliation than the possibility of a two-page ballot.

REQUESTS FROM COUNTY ELECTION OFFICIALS

As mentioned in my opening statement, Act 88 of 2022 has met one of four major requests from county election officials: stable and reliable funding from the state for counties to be able to conduct elections in a free, fair and open manner.

The other outstanding requests that remain are as follows:

- 1) Allowing some form of pre-canvassing of mailed ballots earlier than 7 a.m. on election day. Even if counties are just authorized to open the outer envelope when ballots are

received, we will literally cut in half the amount of time needed on election day to open envelopes to remove ballots for scanning.

- 2) Creating uniformity in the last day to register to vote and for voters to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot. Presently, the last day to register to vote is 15 days before the election, and the last day to apply for an absentee or mail-in ballot is 7 days before the election. By setting the same deadline for both voter registration and mailed ballots, county election officials will be able to have more time to print poll books with the most up to date information, ensure ballots that are mailed to voters have adequate time to reach the intended voter and for the voter receiving the ballot to make their selections and mail the ballot back to county election offices. The delays in the postal delivery system is not new, and in fact has been an outstanding request of county election directors since 2014 when the U.S. Post Office changed its delivery methods. Also, given the Wolf Administration's recent announcement of a dual voter registration and mail-in ballot application this could avoid voter confusion about the differing deadlines and possible litigation that could result from counties processing such applications after the voter registration deadline.
- 3) Improving the removal of deceased voters by amending the Election Code to permit counties to use additional data sources. Presently, the Election Code is very specific and constrictive about what sources we can use to remove deceased voters from our rolls. To assist county election officials in this effort, consider allowing us to use the Social Security Death Index, expanding Pennsylvania's participation in Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), or requiring funeral directors to provide regular report to counties.

Again, I thank the committee for the opportunity to present remarks on behalf of county election officials and welcome you to ask questions and to visit our offices to get a first-hand view of our operations.

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