

PUBLIC HEARING

State and Local Insight on the Administration of Elections in Pennsylvania

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Wayne County, Pennsylvania

Comments.

1. **Closing of public schools**-I would like to see public schools closed on election days in order to use the buildings as polling locations. It is currently the law that we can use schools, but the schools are not in favor of this due to security issues. If the schools were closed for use on election days, most offer ADA compliant entrances, larger rooms to accommodate larger crowds and more parking areas.

Wayne County currently has eight different school buildings that we do not use for any of our 35 precincts.

2. **Early Voting**-We need to change the process for voters that walk-in expecting to "vote early". Voters have the misunderstanding that Pennsylvania has "early voting" similar to other states. They believe they can walk-in, sign-in, and be handed a ballot like the process at the polls on election day.

The current process is that a walk-in voter must complete an application for an absentee or mail-in ballot first. Then a county employee that is trained to use the SURE system, must process the application, wait for system approval and then print the labels for the envelopes. Next the employee must retrieve the correct ballot and prepare a ballot packet just like the ballot packets that are mailed to voters. The packet is handed to the voter, who then has the option to vote in person in a designated area or to take it home and return it via mail or drop off at a later time.

This is a ten minutes process per voter if the SURE system is working properly and there are no interruptions.

Counties have the option to open satellite locations but this is not feasible for most counties. My county would need to transport computer equipment, printers, large numbers of 35 different ballots and balloting materials to another building if one could be established plus provide the additional trained personnel and security.

My current location is not conducive to handle the large number of "early voters" on a daily basis. We had a sheriff's deputy outside our door handing out the applications, directing them to tables set up in the hallway, and handing out numbers to those waiting in the various stages of applying and voting. We had four full time employees plus extra personnel processing the applications and ballot packets for the walk-ins between processing voter registration applications, online applications, trays of incoming and outgoing mail and answering the endless phone calls. Many voters were angry when they were informed of the process and they had to wait longer than they expected.

If Pennsylvania is to continue with "early voting", it must change. Specific dates and times must be established at the discretion of the individual counties. The voters would be required to sign

an actual poll book and be handed a ballot to vote only while they are there, and then place it in a sealed ballot box to be opened and counted on election day.

3. **Registration and Mail-in ballot application deadlines**-The need for change stated in # 2 would change the time-lines for voter registration and applying for mail-in/absentee ballots. We need to push back the voter registration deadline to 30 days prior to elections. This gives counties the necessary time to process registration applications. We also need to push back the deadline to apply for a mail-in/absentee ballot to 15 days prior to the election. This gives the counties time to update and print poll books in time for early voting.

Requests for emergency ballots or UMOVA ballots would not be included in the 15 days prior deadline.

4. **Mail-in and Absentee Voters going to polls**-We need to eliminate the rule allowing voters that have been issued a mail-in/absentee ballot to go to the polls, void their issued ballot and vote in-person. Once a voter has requested a mail-in/absentee ballot and it has been approved and issued by the county, they must vote it and return it to the county by 8 p.m. on election day. They should not be allowed to go to the polls to vote in person. If they never receive the ballot or it is lost or damaged, they must report this anomaly directly to the Bureau of Elections prior to close of polls.

November's election caused great confusion to the poll workers and voters. Some went to the polls and wanted to drop off their voted ballots, some brought their ballot packets to be voided, and some arrived without the ballot packet because they threw it away. The latter group were angry when they could only vote a provisional ballot.

5. **Same day voter registration**-Please do not establish same day voter registration. I can visualize most of my poll workers resigning if they will be required to register voters at the polls. If voter fraud is to occur, this will be the moment of opportunity.
6. **Pre-canvass of mail-in/absentee ballots**-Allow counties to start pre-canvass of mail-in/absentee ballots at least one week prior to election day. As we watched in November, larger counties were still opening ballots three or more days after the election. The public did not understand the process and many were convinced that fraudulent counting was taking place.
7. **All mail-in ballots for small precincts**-A possibility has been discussed for the future to allow counties that have voting precincts with less than 200 voters the option to mail ballots to all the voters in those specific precincts instead of opening a polling location. This would be advantageous against finding poll workers and cost effective.

Wayne County has 3 precincts that would fall in this category. It would cost approximately \$511.00 to mail ballots to every voter in these precincts per election versus the approximate cost of \$1,785.00 for poll workers, constables, building rentals and equipment deliveries per election. Many counties could benefit from this both financially and in time consumption.

I want to thank the committee for investing time into Election Reform and for asking county election directors for their invaluable insight with the processes that actually make our elections work.

Cindy Furman, Wayne County Director of Elections