

PUBLIC HEARING

State and Local Insight on the Administration of Elections in Pennsylvania

March 23, 2020 | 10:00 A.M.

**Hearing Room One – North Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120**

11:00 a.m. Panel Two – Elections Directors

Tim Benyo
Elections Director, Lehigh County

Ed Allison
Elections Director, Lawrence County

Cindy Furman
Elections Director, Wayne County

Karen Barsoum
Assistant Director for Elections Services, Berks County

WRITTEN REMARKS

Committee: I would like to thank you for inviting me today to let me speak on subjects related to administering elections in Pennsylvania. Act 77 and Act 12 have provided several amendments to the act of June 3, 1937, changes that were necessary to move forward. There is yet a lot to be done and I'm confident that this hearing will contribute to that. I'm pleased to know that there is a dialogue and participation with the election directors of Pennsylvania as the outcome from any change in the election code will have to be implemented and administered by them.

Elections take place at least twice a year, many people only focus on that one election once in the four years. We can not wait until this one election to make changes, amend laws, and move forward. Last year was an overload of changes, not only from an administrative point of view but also for voters. The "menu" of options expended so rapidly that it become almost overwhelming and led to confusion and misinformation, which ultimately led to mistrust in the system. Any changes that are going to be presented need to be well established under the law and enough time needs to be allowed for implementation. In addition, a strong emphasis needs to be made on voter education.

There are several items I would like to bring to the floor to take into consideration.

- Eliminating absentee ballots and only have mail-in ballots
- Absentee and mail-in ballots submission cut-off
- Either voting via mail-in ballot or in person at the poll but no changing of mind and surrender ballots at the polling place
- Early canvassing
- Clear law regarding ballot boxes
- Poll Worker appointments
- Simpler method at the polling place
- A method to handle increasing costs to the Counties
- Continuing education for Election Directors

Again, I would like to thank you for allowing us to be part of this conversation.

Karen Barsoum, Assistant Director, County of Berks