

COUNTY OF LEHIGH
Office of the Election Board

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Thank you, Chairman Langerholc and members of the Special Committee on Election Integrity & Reform.

I'm extremely happy that both the Senate & the House are conducting these hearings regarding elections in Pennsylvania as well as having this opportunity to speak with you. These hearings have been a great tool to better educate people that there is so much more to casting a vote than just filling in an oval on a piece of paper. Although there is always room for improvement, I think these hearings have shown that the Commonwealth is moving in the right direction, in a very short time to achieve what some of the great model States have achieved over many years.

Act 77 was a huge change to the 1937 Election Code. The act was signed into law only months prior to a Presidential election year which is not the optimum time to make any changes to the process. If up to directors, this would not have happened during this time frame. In additions to last minute changes, the scrutiny and misinformation that comes with any Presidential year, there is a global pandemic. The efforts of the Department of State, County and Local election officials were heroic.

We've lost over 20 County Election Directors throughout the Commonwealth since Act 77. This loss of knowledge is very concerning.

Pennsylvania was the first state to offer absentee balloting to soldiers away from their homes during the war of 1812. We've been offering absentee ballots for a long time to Military, overseas and Federal voters without a problem. Act 77 only increased the volume of ballots for Counties to administer. With your help, we need to make these process more secure, while not adding barriers on the right to cast a vote.

Your first hearing last week was very enjoyable. There are glaring similarities between the current Pennsylvania election system and those of states participating in the hearings. Just a reminder, we had six months to implement Act 77. We do many of the exact same procedures as the model states in the country.

Below are my thoughts on the first hearing:

As soon as ballots are returned to the office, the envelope bar code, specific to that ballot is scanned and the voter's record is pulled up in the SURE system. The information is verified and the signature is compared, just like Colorado. If there is an issue with that information, the ballot is set aside for further investigation. Clarification on how signatures are scrutinized, cured and handled within the statutes would be extremely helpful and bring us closer to the systems of other States. Signature verification software is a fantastic security tool.

I can't emphasis enough, Colorado started their mail balloting and election reform in 1990s. 2013 HB1303 was the major overhaul and alterations to previous changes. As almost all testifiers indicated, reform changes have never stopped since the initial reform.

As specified in the last hearing, voters, politicians and interest groups all have mail balloting lists available to them prior to each Primary or Election. There is no burden on anyone requesting to see this information. The availability of such lists is specifically expressed in Act 77.

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Postal tracking of voter's ballots was requested by Counties for the new SURE system.

All machines used in the Commonwealth are certified by EAC & DOS. Logic & Accuracy testing is completed prior to machines being distributed to voting precincts. As in other states, 2% Audits and now Risk Limiting Audits (RLA) are being done post Primary and Election.

Adjudication of ballots is done with bipartisan observation and discrepancies are based on a document called, "What Constitutes a Vote".

These are just a few examples of the best practices Pennsylvania has been doing for years. As stated earlier, there is always room for improvement. Specifications pertaining to curing ballots and drop boxes would be extremely helpful. Additional time pre-canvassing will get timely results and increase voter satisfaction.

Thank you for inviting me. Election Directors are always available to help you better make important decisions on meaningful and logical election reform legislation. I'm happy to answer any questions.