



May 18, 2017

The Honorable Mike Folmer  
Senate of Pennsylvania  
Chair, State Government Committee  
337 Main Capitol Building  
Senate Box 203048  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3048

The Honorable Anthony Williams  
Senate of Pennsylvania  
Minority Chair, State Government Committee  
Room 11 East Wing  
Senate Box 203008  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3008

The Honorable Daryl Metcalfe  
PA House of Representatives  
Chair, State Government Committee  
144 Main Capitol Building  
PO Box 202012  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2012

The Honorable Matthew Bradford  
PA House of Representatives  
Minority Chair, State Government Committee  
323 Main Capitol Building  
PO Box 202070  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2070

Dear Chairs:

We write to you as members of Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition of advocacy and community organizations joined together to launch a coordinated campaign to update Pennsylvania's election system. Our members represent communities across Pennsylvania from seniors, working people and immigrants, to people with disabilities and faith leaders. We have consistently advocated for policies and practices which make it more convenient for eligible citizens to cast their ballots and to ensure that all citizens have an equal opportunity to make their voices heard. This why we felt it imperative to write to you regarding the FY 2017-18 budget that was recently passed by the House Republican Caucus. As House Bill 218 currently stands, this budget will adversely impact the Department of State – the entity charged with carrying out our elections – and in turn, every citizen looking to participate in our democracy in the coming years.

**The budget will prevent the Department of State from printing and disseminating enough voter registration application forms to the general public.** The voter registration form is the piece of paper which stands between a citizen and their ballot. Our coalition members work in their respective communities to register eligible voters all year, every year, not just in major election years. Reducing the number of voter registration forms that are printed will directly impair the ability of qualified citizens to participate in their right to vote.

The proposed budget requires more cuts to a shrinking Department of State which provides vital services not only to Pennsylvania voters, but to county commissioners throughout the state. **Currently, the Department of State has 20 employees – roughly half the size it was in 2008 –**

**yet serves more registered voters than ever before.** Additional staff cuts mean the Department will be less able to be responsive to prospective and current voters, creating service delays for would-be voters in an already under-staffed office. With fewer staff, much-needed election guidance, information, and training for county commissioners and their elections staff could be stalled, which may in turn lead to dangerous delays or inconsistencies in the processing and verification of voter registration applications, and election administration generally.

**We need to focus our efforts to ensure that every qualified citizen has the ability to successfully register and vote.** The budget passed by the House Republican Caucus will have lasting, detrimental effects on this very goal. We urge you to fund the Department of State at the level requested by the Department in their budget proposal. Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

The Keystone Votes Coalition