

Keystone Votes

THE COALITION FOR MODERN ELECTIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Keystone Votes Responds to DOS Report on Elections

HARRISBURG (Aug. 1, 2020) – Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition comprising 43 civil rights, civil liberties, and good government groups, as well as large civic engagement organizations with members in all 67 counties, today issued the following statement regarding a new Department of State report that analyzes the June primary election and includes recommendations to address challenges that are still looming over the November general election.

“This report demonstrates the integrity of county and state election officials. It’s an honest assessment of the good and the bad from the primary. After all, free and fair elections require transparency and accountability,” said Ray Murphy, state coordinator for Keystone Votes.

“The content of the report reaffirms two things we’ve known for a while now: 1.) Vote by mail works, and it works pretty well. But simple fixes to the system would allow election officials to count mail votes faster; and 2.) A lot more attention must be paid to polling place safety, so that those who choose to vote in person can cast a ballot closer to their home, and get in and out quickly, without risking their health.

“The legislature didn’t need this report to take the lead on preparing for the general election. And time is running out.

“Lawmakers need to return to session and work with the administration to address these challenges and enact legislative reforms as quickly as possible. We need to treat these matters with urgency so election directors have enough time to implement the changes and voters have time to understand them.

“This is about preserving the integrity of our elections by ensuring every eligible voter can participate in the process without risking their health and safety and every vote gets counted securely and accurately.”

The General Assembly passed House Bill 2502 in mid-June, with the governor signing it as Act 35 of 2020. The law required the Department of State to produce a full report on the presidential primary by Aug. 1.

Held amid a global pandemic, the June election was the first time voters were able to use the state's new mail-in ballots. More than 1.4 million voters took advantage of mail-in and absentee ballots, marking the first time that mailed in votes surpassed in-person voting in Pennsylvania. Even more mail-in ballots are expected during the presidential election.

To ensure Pennsylvanians can vote without risking their health or safety, Keystone Votes has been advocating for several legislative changes before the November general election, including allowing counties to pre-canvass mail-in ballots and giving counties the flexibility to start planning for polling consolidation, with certain limitations.

Keystone Votes' legislative agenda is available at www.KeystoneVotes.org, click "Newsroom."

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Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition comprising 43 civil rights, civil liberties, and good government groups, as well as large civic engagement organizations with members in all 67 counties. The coalition has been working for years to update Pennsylvania's election system, help counties buy modern machines, and update technology to enhance security and accessibility before the 2020 elections. More at www.keystonevotes.org.