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Voter Education & Registration Drive Leaders, Voting Access Advocates Push for Modernization Initiatives as House Wraps up Election Reform Hearings

HARRISBURG (April 15, 2021) – At the ninth and final hearing among a series convened by the House State Government Committee to examine the 2020 elections, several members of the nonpartisan Keystone Votes coalition echoed the call for a comprehensive reform plan to update election laws and implement policy changes to enhance voter access and safety.

“A lot of work has been done to examine ways we can reform Pennsylvania’s election laws. And while so much has been done, there remains much to do,” testified Wesley Porter Washington Gadsden, Statewide Field Director for One PA. “Our hope now is that this bipartisan spirit continues as we work together to advance proposals that modernize Pennsylvania’s election laws and make voting more convenient, safer, and more accessible to all.”

In addition to One PA, the Committee of 70 and Common Cause also testified during the hearing. All of them are members of Keystone Votes, one of the state’s leading and most respected voices when it comes to modernizing Pennsylvania’s election process. The coalition comprises 42 civil rights, civil liberties and good government groups working on election modernization.

“Now that the House hearings are completed, the real work of advancing reforms must begin in earnest,” Gadsden said. “Democracy works best when all citizens participate, so it is imperative that we work together on behalf of all voters to ensure their vote counts and their voices are heard. Those of us who work to educate and inform voters and ensure they register and have access at the polls firmly believe we need to enact policies that remove barriers and empower people to turn out on election day.”

The coalition’s legislative agenda focuses on making voting more convenient, safer, and more accessible. Besides the House State Government Committee, the Senate Special Committee on Election Integrity and Reform and the Pennsylvania Election Law Advisory Board, which includes a Keystone Votes coalition partner, continue their own reviews of the 2020 election.

Among the recommendations to enhance voter engagement.

- **Improve Vote-by-Mail:** Defend against rollbacks to vote-by-mail; push for earlier pre-canvassing, voter notification of ballot accuracy, and counting ballots postmarked by Election Day; and allow the “National Change of Address Form” to help with registration updates.
- **Modernize Process to Enhance Safety, Voter Access:** Allow early in-person voting, same-day voter registration and the establishment of vote centers.
- **Provide Funding to Support Safe, Efficient Operations:** Ensure counties have the funds they need for satellite election offices and electronic poll books.

Right now, no policy changes are expected before the May primary, although most advocates want reforms in place before lawmakers recess the legislative session at the end of June so that election directors have enough time to implement any new policies.

For Keystone Votes’ full legislative agenda, please visit www.KeystoneVotes.org.

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Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition comprising 42 advocacy and community organizations across the state, has been urging the commonwealth to implement reforms that would modernize the state’s election system and update technology to enhance security and accessibility. More at www.keystonevotes.org.