

Keystone Votes

THE COALITION FOR MODERN ELECTIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Keystone Votes Urges Governor to Re-Open Vote-by-Mail Process in Wake of Protests

People of color at most risk of disenfranchisement

HARRISBURG (June 1, 2020) – Keystone Votes today urged Gov. Tom Wolf to re-open the vote-by-mail process so that anyone who wants to request a mail-in ballot may do so until 8 p.m. tomorrow, and then have four weeks to return ballots to their county.

The nonpartisan coalition, which comprises 43 civil rights, civil liberties, and good government groups, as well as large civic engagement organizations with members in all 67 counties, expressed concern about how government responses to protests in the wake of George Floyd’s death could affect access to in-person voting in the Primary Election.

People of color and low-income Pennsylvanians are disproportionately affected. Polling place consolidations in many of the state’s heavily populated areas compound problems that could disenfranchise voters of color.

“It will be difficult for many people of color voters to cast ballots in-person at polling places tomorrow,” **Keystone Votes State Coordinator Ray Murphy** said. “More people of color voters than white voters planned to cast a ballot in person tomorrow, and now may stay home, citing concerns about safety.”

“Poll workers across the state are calling to cancel their shifts, citing fears from COVID-19. Philadelphia is seeing an even larger drop off of poll workers due to concerns of violence,” **Common Cause Interim Executive Director, Suzanne Almeida** said. “Poll workers are the front lines of our elections. A reduction of poll workers on this scale means some polling places may be understaffed, and in some cases, not open at all.”

“Polling place sites may serve as centers of peaceful protest, which leaves the voters in attendance vulnerable to police violence,” **One Pennsylvania Executive Director Erin Kramer** said.

“Even for voters who want to cast a ballot in person, a city-ordered curfew like the one in Philadelphia may prevent voters from leaving their home,” **Make the Road Executive Director Maegan Llerena** said.

For these reasons, the coalition wants the governor to act immediately and re-open the vote-by-mail process so that anyone who wants to request a mail-in ballot may do so until 8 p.m. tomorrow, and have four weeks to return their ballots to their county.

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Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition comprising 43 advocacy and community organizations working to update Pennsylvania’s election system, has been urging the state to start working now on reforms that would modernize the state’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.