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## **Keystone Votes Unveils Election Reform Agenda**

**HARRISBURG (Feb. 23, 2021)** – Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition comprising 42 civil rights, civil liberties and good government groups working in all 67 counties to modernize Pennsylvania’s election system, today unveiled a comprehensive reform plan that would update election laws and implement policy changes to enhance voter engagement and security.

The coalition’s agenda to make voting more convenient, accessible and secure comes as the administration, General Assembly and separate advisory panels are studying the 2020 campaign contests to recommend potential changes to how elections are administered in Pennsylvania.

“Democracy works best when all citizens participate and when election rules are nonpartisan,” said **Ray Murphy, state coordinator for Keystone Votes**, which for years has been working to enhance security and modernize Pennsylvania’s election system. “Our coalition is offering legislators a roadmap to secure, accessible and fair elections for all citizens who want to exercise their right to vote.”

Pennsylvania faced its toughest election ever in 2020 when the state had to implement an entirely new voting system amid record turnout during a global pandemic. The state’s historical performance was defined largely by two bipartisan reform laws—Act 77 of 2019 and Act 12 of 2020—that the General Assembly and administration put in place prior to the primary and general elections.

But even with those sweeping reforms, Pennsylvania is still behind the vast majority of states when it comes to making sure that voters can count on 21st century convenience and security at the ballot box. Keystone Votes’ agenda builds on the successful bipartisan reforms implemented by the administration and General Assembly over the last 18 months.

“The 2020 elections have had a galvanizing effect. Everyone is focused on the process. Now is the time to make our election system even better. The only way we do that is by keeping the will of voters front and center,” said **Wesley Gadsden, Statewide Field Director for One Pennsylvania**.

“The 2020 election has shown why we must continue to make our elections accessible to all voters,” said **Diana Robinson, Civic Engagement Director for Make the Road Pennsylvania.** “Black, Indigenous, People of Color and working-class voters who are frontline workers and work late or unpredictable hours often were disenfranchised because they were unable to show up to the polls. That brought to light the exclusions that our current way of voting creates and dismissed the myth that these voters are apathetic and don’t care. They want to have their voices heard, which is why we must continue to update our election code to work with voters’ schedules and the reality of their lives.”

### **Improve Vote-by-Mail Process**

- Extend **pre-canvassing** to allow counties to begin processing ballots prior to Election Day—pre-canvassing isn’t vote counting—and establish a better voter notification process to enable simple mistakes to be fixed and **ensure ballots are completed accurately.**
- Allow mail-in ballots to be counted if they are postmarked by Election Day **but arrive at the county election office after Election Day.**
- Allow the “**National Change of Address Form**” to serve as an update for voter registration and vote by mail.

### **Modernize Process to Enhance Security, Voter Access**

- Allow **early in-person voting** to relieve congestion at polling locations and give voters with challenging work schedules or family situations the chance to choose the time that works best for them.
- Permit **same-day voter registration**, as most residents do not become engaged in elections until the final weeks, when campaigns reach their peak.
- Establish **vote centers**, giving voters the chance to cast a ballot whether they are by their home, job, school or anywhere that is convenient, and relieve county pressure on poll worker recruitment.

### **Provide Funding to Support Secure, Efficient Operations**

- Ensure counties have the funds for **satellite election offices** that provide convenient voter registration services and mail-in and absentee ballot application processing and voting.
- Provide funding to help counties purchase and implement **electronic poll books** to improve election security and accuracy by relying on real-time data.

As part of his proposed 2021-22 General Fund budget presentation, Gov. Tom Wolf also unveiled his legislative agenda for the current two-year session, calling for additional election reforms, including same-day voter registration and funding to help counties purchase and implement electronic poll books.

The House State Government Committee has begun a series of hearings to review last year's general election to recommend potential policy changes.

The Pennsylvania Election Law Advisory Board, established under Act 12 of 2020, recently convened its first meeting to eventually make recommendations to the General Assembly about ways to improve the election process.

For the full legislative agenda, please visit [www.KeystoneVotes.org](http://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](http://www.keystonevotes.org).***