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Record Number of Mail-in Ballot Applications Demonstrates Need to Continue Work to Modernize Pa. Election Laws

Voting by mail is a secure system with safeguards against fraud

HARRISBURG (May 4, 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 in response to [the news conference held by Gov. Tom Wolf and Department of State Sec. Kathleen Boockvar](#) regarding the nearly 1 million voters have applied for a mail-in ballot for the Primary Election on June 2:

“The record number of eligible voters who are taking advantage of the state’s new vote-by-mail option proves that Pennsylvania made the right decision when it updated its election laws last year,” said Ray Murphy, state coordinator for Keystone Votes.

“Voting by mail is a secure system with safeguards against fraud, and it provides certainty in uncertain times,” he said. “Imagine if this option did not exist today? This is the perfect example of why our work to modernize our election system is never finished and why we must continue our efforts to make voting more convenient, more secure, and equally accessible for all who are eligible.”

The governor and secretary announced that the state has received 948,831 applications for mail-in and absentee ballots. Mail-in ballots give eligible voters a secure way to vote from the comfort and safety of their home during this pandemic.

The mail-in option was included in Act 77 of 2019, which ushered in the most sweeping election reforms in Pennsylvania in 80 years. Last month, the state enacted Act 12 of 2020 to move the Primary Election to June 2, along with other short-term reforms for administering elections during the time of COVID-19.

Last week, the Senate State Government Committee convened a hearing to look at challenges the state and election directors face as the election approaches. In testimony, the coalition

outlined several key policy issues need to be addressed or considered not only in advance of the Primary Election but for the General Election as well, especially if COVID-19 makes a resurgence in the fall.

Even with increased mail-in voting, in-person voting opportunities must remain in every county, as mail-in and absentee ballots will not be an option for every eligible voter, like those with disabilities or those who face a digital divide, although proper personal protective equipment (PPE) must be available to keep poll workers and voters safe. County boards of elections also should be permitted to create vote centers or introduce curbside drop-off to replace precincts that close.

The General Assembly also has a role to play in ensuring funding is available and that all costs related to election administration changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are covered by the state rather than by the counties or through the Pennsylvania Department of State.

For a full list of the recommendations, visit www.KeystoneVotes.org and visit “Newsroom” to read the testimony; or, click [HERE](#).

For information on the new mail-in ballots, visit www.votesPA.com.

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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.