

## Senate State Government Committee

11/14/17

### Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 761

Thank you for the opportunity to offer some thoughts about Senate Bill 761 and the way in which we select our Lieutenant Governor in the commonwealth.

While we are one of 45 states in the Union that have an office of Lieutenant Governor, we are one of only eight that pick that office holder through the method currently prescribed by our constitution. 18 other States elect their Lieutenant Governor in the way contemplated by S.B. 761.

The method proposed in the legislation is very familiar to all of us. It is similar to the federal model of electing a President and Vice President that has been in place and has served us well as a nation since 1804 with the adoption of the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Frankly, it is in similarity between the proposed change and the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment that has the greatest merit. What S.B. 761 is contemplating is taking the decision to select an individual who, at a moment's notice could be called on to lead our Commonwealth, out of the hands of the voters. The power of that initial selection will be transferred to a perspective party standard bearer and his or her advisors.

Frankly, at a time when voters and many elected officials are all clamoring to place more direct authority in the hands of voters, such a move should be done thoughtfully and carefully. However, the value of such a move in this case is that the ultimate decision to relinquish this responsibility appropriately rests with those that have such responsibility, now the people. I, like all of you, trust their judgement. If they feel this is an appropriate and necessary step, than our Constitution should be amended and Lieutenant Governors should be chosen accordingly. The value in such a move is obvious. The Gubernatorial candidate selection gives insight into that individuals thought process. It would afford the first real example of how that candidate might govern. The choice would give the voters an indispensable look into the judgement of their perspective leader.

However, I am also reminded of the words of a keen observer and admirer of our form of government, Winston Churchill, who said, "The American form of government is the worst form of government ever conceived by man, except for each other." Mr. Churchill's point, no form of government is perfect, nor is it easy. Our form of representative democracy wondrous and flawed as it might be, will continue to require active and rigorous involvement from all of us. As such, this proposal, or any other proposal, will likely not be a complete remedy to a perceived problem. The truth is political calculations and electoral will continue to be part of the process of creating a team of running mates; whether those calculations are made by the voters or an individual. Regardless of the method of selection, as history has shown us, some teams will become true partners and some will not.