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Testimony by Jerry Feaser, Director
Dauphin County Bureau of Registration and Elections
Joint Public Hearing of
Senate Transportation Committee
Senate State Government Committee
December 12, 2017

Thank you, Senate Transportation Committee Chairmen Rafferty and Sabatina and Senate State Government Committee Chairmen Folmer and Williams and members of the committees for the opportunity to address a very important issue facing the 67 county election offices: correcting the “glitch” that enabled non-citizens to become registered to vote.

The Statewide Uniform Registry of Electors (SURE) – along with Motor Voter and the Department of State’s addition of Online Voter Registration – are tremendous tools in ensuring Pennsylvania voters have as many opportunities to register to vote or update their registration as possible. But, as I was taught by my 10th grade U.S. History teacher, everyone who has the **right** to vote carries the personal **responsibility** to ensure that their registration is current and correct; it is not government’s responsibility, but our agencies – working together at the state and county level – can make the process easier to access and understand.

Motor Voter and Online registration reduces the chance for typos or the transposing of numbers when creating a voter record since the voter is the one data entering or reviewing the information. There are fewer instances in which voter registration office employees must try to decipher someone’s handwriting on a paper application.

At the county level, we support whatever change is required to ensure that those who are not yet United States citizens are not presented with the offer to register to vote when transacting business with the Department of Transportation. The Department of State’s online registration system immediately stops anyone indicating that they are not a United States citizen from completing an application, and – at the county level – we do not process applications in which an individual has indicated that they are not a United States citizen.

In Dauphin County’s experience, most instances in which non-citizens become registered to vote are during transactions at PennDOT. Several individuals had come to my office directly from PennDOT to state that they mistakenly registered to vote and request us to reject their application when we receive it from PennDOT.

Through SURE, our offices process hundreds of applications each week from PennDOT, the Department of Health and online applications, as well as paper applications. We do not have the

resources, expertise, access or authority to do a citizenship check on each application. We do a “HAVA” check – Help America Vote Act – which runs the applicant’s information through a check of PennDOT and Social Security Administration records to see if the date of birth and drivers’ license number or last four-digits of a Social Security Number provided to us matches that agency’s records. However, neither of these checks are for citizenship.

Of the 48 non-citizens who have requested my office remove them from the voter rolls, 10 voted at least once. While only 10 have voted and 48 have been removed from the rolls for not being a United States citizen, I am only aware of these 48 non-citizens who came forward. I have no way of determining how many others remain on the rolls.

To be clear, there are avenues for new citizens looking to register to vote. Our offices routinely receive monthly mailings from the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition which only assists its clients with voter registration once they’ve completed the naturalization process. My office has worked with the County Courts to register new citizens during the reception that follows naturalization ceremonies, and we set up voting machines with sample ballots to offer new citizens a chance to practice voting.

To express the real-world impact of non-citizens registering, I want to highlight one example of a legal **resident** of the United States who had not yet completed the naturalization process to become a United States **citizen**. I can only take what this individual sent in his e-mail at face value, which I present verbatim:

Thank you Mr jerry for the quick response my name is (REDACTED) in 2005 I went to one of your Dmv offices in Pa to get my drive licence and with your computer system and add to that the luck of English since it's not my primary language you sent me a voter registration what i ignored it for the 3 years thinking was by mistake and it keeps coming till the 2008 elections and with the both parties knocking my doors to go vote I did and in 2010 my green card was revoked for that reason.my life become so difficult I have a familly and kids .my dad past away and couldn't go to his funiral because I was scared not to joint my familly back here.the immigration office needs prove from your office telling the truth about this incident and explain that it happened to other people and not there fault in case they voted and that the Dmv take the real responsibility for that. sorry Sir for bothering you but a future of my whole familly in your hand all my familly are citizens and I am supporting my kids what's you think will happen to all of us in case I was deported I lived for the last 7 years in hell can't work legally can't open my own business. Can't travel I am lost and you are my only hope to convince the immigration office that I am innocent and I never pretend to be a citizen to vote thank you and God bless .

His telephone call was more heart-wrenching. Clearly not proficient in English, this man registered to vote despite his stating he was not yet a citizen. Once registered, during the 2008 presidential election, he was repeatedly urged to vote, despite reiterating that he shouldn’t have been registered to vote in the first place since he wasn’t a citizen. His status in the United States

now was in jeopardy. After providing this individual with a letter stating that he was removed from the voter rolls I didn't hear from him again.

This person's experience and the other examples I have witnessed firsthand demonstrate that non-citizens registering and voting are real problems that have real-world consequences for citizens and non-citizens alike. We risk U.S. citizens losing faith in our democratic process if they see these non-citizen registrations going unaddressed; and non-citizens who register and cast a vote can suffer unintended but significant consequences that may cost them their chance of participating in the American promise.

In closing, I want to take a few minutes to comment on cyber-security concerns. Our voting machines – which are Direct-Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machines – have no internet or Wi-Fi connection. Additionally, there are several layers of checks built into protecting our machines from tampering and, should a Judge of Election suspect one or more of the machines assigned to their election district may have been compromised, we can provide them a replacement machine within 30 minutes.

Given the security and safety features built into our current system – including chain of custody of the memory cartridges – I could drop off one of my voting machines in the middle of Red Square in Moscow and the only way the Russians could hack into it is by using an ax.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the Committees.

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