

Senate State Government Committee

Comments from Pennsylvania Association of Election Officials

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Chairman Folmer, Chairman Williams and members of the State Government

Committee, the Pennsylvania Association of Election Officials is honored to have an opportunity to have another discussion with you today.

More than 15 months ago, election officials from across the Commonwealth came before this same committee with our hands extended, not for as we said at the time for money, but with ideas. During that hearing we strongly encouraged the General Assembly and this committee to continue the conversations with county election officials – something that had not occurred very often over the years – so that we could create a more convenient, effective and cost-efficient system for voters and the counties that administer elections.

We couldn't be any more pleased to be sitting in front of you today as one of those ideas, which was also generated out of the SR 394 Task Force, has brought us together to consider such an important step in the effort to modernize elections in Pennsylvania: Senate Bill 1249, which would create a commission or advisory board on Election Law that would result in those lines of communication being open on an ongoing and regular basis.

We are so appreciative of the committee's consideration of this effort and believe this conversation and those that are yet to come will be a boost to Pennsylvania as we move forward. This commission, with its varied makeup, would give the State Government Committee in the Senate and House immediate feedback on any election bills or proposed changes to the law long before they neared a vote on the floor of either chamber, addressing concerns, costs and administrative impacts or even highlighting the positives that would follow. As a result of the importance of elections in our nation, we believe it is a wonderful goal to open these lines of communication with election officials, as well as other important stakeholders in the process.

While there have been some slight modifications to Senate Bill 1249 from the SR 394 recommendation, overall it is a very sound and reasonable measure. But we do have a couple of minor tweaks that, should you agree, would make it even stronger:

1. Identify county election officials as a separate entity under member groups so what limited slots there may be aren't diminished by a shared presence with commissioners.
2. Add a 5th group, which was recommended by SR 394, to include experts in the fields of computer, network and cyber security, resilience assessment, internal controls accounting, information technology auditing and statistics.