

Zane N. Swanger

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Mifflin County, Pennsylvania

Public Hearing Testimony on Senate Bill No. 48 of the 2019 Session

Good morning, my name is Zane N. Swanger, I am the Director of Elections & Voter Registration for Mifflin County. I would like to extend a sincere thank you to Chairmen Folmer and Williams, along with other members of the Senate State Government Committee for holding this public hearing on Senate Bill 48 of the 2019 session. It is a true honor and privilege to be invited to this forum to testify today.

Mifflin is a county of the 6th class, with just under 25,000 registered voters across our 26 voting precincts. We are mostly rural with an exception of the County Seat of Lewistown Borough. Currently, Mifflin County already uses, since the mid-2000s, a federal and state certified verifiable paper ballot system in collaboration with our Optical Scan precinct tabulators and ADA compliant ballot marking devices.

With my initial review of Senate Bill No. 48, I feel legislators are moving in an appropriate direction as it pertains to reforming the 1937 Pennsylvania Election Code. Being a new election director in the state (just under 2 years of service), I see the overall attitude and agenda preference regarding election reform truly strengthening.

As an Election Director, I handle content requiring constant chains of custody as well as a strong understanding of necessary procedures and events that must occur within specific timeframes. This is what I find this bill to be: a formal outline of necessary procedures and a clear sequence of events that will assure integrity and transparency regarding the process of decertification and election machine replacement in the future. To date, I feel the Administration has already accomplished various tasks outlined in the legislation. Now, it comes at a time to reverse engineer the process we currently face and set policy for future events.

Senate Bill 48 clearly outlines the process the Administration would be required to follow in the future when it comes time to begin this process all over again. As a young election director, and from the point-of-view of one that plans to continue working in this field for election cycles to come, I foresee this (election equipment decertification and re-implementation) happening at least once, if not more, in my career.

The Pennsylvania Department of State has done notably well at keeping election administrators across the 67 counties informed on the new certification process. We had been informed regarding necessary measures being taken to address the importance of appropriate funding, as well as providing technical resources on how our equipment replacement should take place. I personally wish more official information had been released, sooner, pertaining to appropriate funding efforts and clearly indicating that all 67 counties were required to replace equipment,

not solely counties who hadn't already been utilizing verifiable paper ballot systems: as this was my initial comprehension of the Administration's directive.

Now, the individuals in this room have the opportunity to make the processes and procedures transparent along with the certainty that appropriate and reasonable steps are followed in a strategic sequence and within a particular timeline. This will not only assure a well grasped understanding of the plans for decertification but also to allow for appropriate channels of communications to be open.

Senate Bill 48 declares the need to form a Voting System Decertification Commission which would consist of two members appointed by the Governor (at least one being a county commissioner), the Secretary of State, two members appointed by the Senate, and another two by the House of Representatives. I would encourage this body to consider the addition of two appointed members to the proposed commission under this bill: one election director from both a western and eastern county who would also be involved with the collective membership of the Voting System Decertification Commission.

I testify today with no political agenda as I feel such agenda is unnecessary for an individual in the role of Election Director. Taking that a step further, election administration shouldn't be seen as a political agenda, period. Instead, election reform should be bipartisan with fair representation, participation, and cooperation.

I make use of my testimony to encourage the consideration of this bill and others that pertain to beneficial reforms to our current election laws within the Commonwealth. Elections are already transparent. Legislation, such as Senate Bill 48, is a prime example of what can be done to continue and improve the transparency of matters involving election administration. The topic of “election reform” is trending throughout the nation from non-profit organizations, government entities, and the media alike. This now arrives at an exciting opportunity for individuals from various professions (elected officials, election administrators, public servants, and other concerned audiences) to form collective efforts in strengthening our channels of communications and implementation of process improvements surrounding election administration.

I once again thank Chairmen Folmer and Williams, along with other members of the committee for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to hearing the additional testimonies along with any questions you may have.

Thank You,

Zane N. Swanger

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