Senate and House State Government Committees
Roundtable: "Election Issues and Legislation"
1 p.m. Monday, Sept. 16 Room 60 East Wing

Keystone Votes is a nonpartisan coalition comprising 41 organizations that have been working for years to make voting more convenient, more secure and equally accessible for all who are eligible. That includes reforms that would modernize the state's election system, which has not been updated in more than 60 years; help counties buy modern, secure and voter-verifiable machines; and update technology with tools such as e-poll books to enhance security and accessibility before the 2020 elections. More at www.KeystoneVotes.org.

Key Issues:

- **No-Excuse Absentee Ballots/Optional Vote by Mail:** Keystone Votes supports a plan to empower voters to request and submit absentee ballots for any reason --- allowing them to vote early by mail. We believe this can be done statutorily rather than through a constitutional amendment. We also believe the time to enact this policy is now, before the fall legislative session adjourns, so that election directors have time to implement the new policy before the 2020 elections and voters have time to learn about the new voting opportunity.

  Pennsylvania already allows voters who cannot make it to the polls due to illness or absence from the state on Election Day to cast absentee ballots by mail ahead of time. Providing the opportunity for any voter who needs to cast an absentee ballot will ensure all citizens' voices are heard. Voting by mail without excuse also protects access to our democracy for people with disabilities and senior citizens, without unnecessary hurdles or privacy invasions, as well as those who work long and nontraditional hours and may have trouble making it to polling places because of work or family commitments. Optional voting by mail is tested and proven. At least 30 states across the country already allow their citizens to vote by mail in some fashion, so it's been tested and proven, meaning fraud is not an issue. Absentee ballots actually help to increase security because they provide a voter-verifiable paper trail that can be counted and that is auditable.

- **Absentee Ballot Deadline Changes:** Current law requires absentee ballots to be submitted by the Friday before an election. Keystone Votes has long advocated for deadlines that follow the best practices of other states, where absentee ballots must be postmarked on Election Day and physically at the county election office by the seventh day after the election. That remains the coalition's position, as it is consistent with current Pennsylvania law for military and overseas absentee ballot voters, but this still marks a significant improvement over current law. People who cast absentee ballots take extra steps to exercise their right to vote but often face tight, unreasonable deadlines that may invalidate their civic participation or create barriers to voting.

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