

**County Election Official Notes for Senate Hearing
April 30, 2020**

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- It appears 1000s of Wisconsin and Ohio voters in their recent primaries never got a ballot. If Pennsylvania is okay with that, then we should do nothing. If we're not okay with it, then let's fix it now for the primary and November.
- To be clear there is no fault here. We are all trying our best under unprecedented circumstances to figure out the best way to deliver elections while keeping voters and poll workers safe. We hear and see "disenfranchisement" needing to be the nation's No. 1 priority in discussions about options for voters. We would argue Covid-19 has disenfranchised the world at the moment and our number one priority must be safety.
- The best option to avoid what's happening in other states might have been to simply mail all registered voters a ballot. That's the only way to avoid a situation where counties will not be able to process all applications.
- Because we are required to provide accommodations for voters with accessibility needs and we recognize some voters do not update their records, we would also suggest some form of in-person voting locations, perhaps, at local public high school gyms, which are accessible and provide plenty of parking and space to ensure social distancing.
- Pennsylvania and many other states might have miscalculated the fallout from massive scaling up of mail voting because there was one bottle neck we couldn't avoid – processing applications. Counties were not built for this either administratively or through human capital. There aren't enough people and hours in the day in many places to overcome that bottleneck because PA has been built to handle a minimal number of mail applications over decades.

- While we expected difficulties and some hiccups related to the roll out of Act 77, we went from expecting perhaps a 15 to 20 percent uptick in applications to seeing currently a 400 to 500 percent increase and growing. Put another way, counties were expecting about 30 inches of snow. What we're getting is the equivalent of 10 feet and it's going to get worse.
- We're at 800,000 applications now and are falling behind daily. Other states have seen exponential explosions of applications in the weeks leading up to their primaries so "we ain't seen nothing yet." Wisconsin's numbers multiplied 10 times during the three weeks prior to their primary. I don't think we'll get that high, but even if we triple or quadruple what we've done, many counties will be in trouble.
- If no changes are coming for the primary, one request: We are asking the Governor to issue a public directive immediately asking all polling locations to be open for voters on June 2. There seems to be plenty of confusion from locations as to what they're permitted and not permitted to do when it comes to opening and a message from the Governor would go a long way to helping counties secure at least public buildings. We understand private facilities might not be covered.
- Last note: With the overwhelming majority of ballots cast coming by mail, PA should full expect that it will be several days before complete results are reported. Any in-person results will be reported under normal timelines on June 2, but mail ballots will likely take days to process. Should address pre-canvass options for November.