



OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

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COUNTY CONTROLLER

DEPUTY CONTROLLER

March 23, 2020

Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania
Mike Turzai, Speaker of the Pennsylvania State House
Jake Corman, Senate Majority Leader
Jay Costa, Senate Minority Leader
Bryan Cutler, State House Majority Leader
Frank Dermody, State House Minority Leader

Dear Interested Parties,

In my position as Lehigh County Controller, it's my responsibility to be a financial watchdog. In addition to identifying money that could have been saved, I must also anticipate potential costs and look to avoid them. As we're both businessmen who've entered into politics, I know you appreciate the value of proactively addressing problems.

With recent news that the legislature plans to delay the primary to June 2nd, I believe it is also crucial Pennsylvania uses this time to prepare for a truly unprecedented set of circumstances.

COVID-19 has become an unprecedented national crisis of sweeping proportions. Each passing day reveals a higher number of infected and results in greater disruptions to everyday life. While the safety precautions we're taking are necessary to flatten the curve, they're also directly going to affect the upcoming Pennsylvania primary.

As the state continues to push vote-by-mail, it's imperative that our local board of elections have the capacity to effectively deal with the expended increase in ballots.

Under the current legislation it is likely the county would have to pay considerable overtime to county employees in order to process the number of ballots that we're likely to receive. In addition, we may have to considerably increase staff costs to process the ballots. These would both further complicate the process and needlessly cost the county money.



I'm calling on the Governor's Office and the State Legislature to extend the period of time allotted for the counting of mailed ballots. Currently, counties don't have the option to process them earlier, meaning results will likely be delayed in marginal races.

The decision to move the primary election is wise given the nature of this virus. However, it alone will not ensure that this year's primary is not entirely disrupted.

I believe given the historic nature of this moment, the state should still provide every Pennsylvanian a mail-in ballot on June 2nd, to further ensure everyone has the right to vote.

It is likely that moving the date will affect turnout, and many polling places along with their workers may remain concerned about the virus well into June. Therefore, I believe it wise to both delay the primary and further give every voter the capacity to make their voice heard.

Our election offices need adequate time to process these ballots and should be able to record the votes earlier, allowing for quicker election results. The mailing of ballots to every registered voter will also strengthen the democratic process.

These steps will make sure that during this crucial moment in our nation's history, no one is denied the right to exercise their most fundamental right.

Mark Pinsley

Lehigh County Controller

The opinions expressed are our own and the comments are not a result of an audit performed by the office of the controller generally accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS)