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HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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**House of Representatives**  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

**HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE ROUNDTABLE**

**Topic: Protecting Voting Rights**

**Dubbs Memorial Community Center – Allentown, PA**

**February 26, 2019**

**AGENDA**

2:00 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks

2:10 p.m. Panelists:

- Rev. Dr. Larry Pickens  
Ecumenical Director  
Lehigh Conference of Churches
- Edward Hozza, Jr.  
Director of Administration  
County of Lehigh
- Mary Erdman  
Vice President, Action  
League of Women Voters of Lehigh County
- Hilda Gonzalez  
Founder/Director  
Interlace Cultural y Desarrollo Integral Mexicano de Lehigh Valley, Inc.
- Barbara Redmond  
Secretary  
Allentown NAACP

3:50 p.m. Closing Remarks

# YOUR VOTE COUNTS

## **Election Day Starts NOW**

*Four separate bills sponsored by Reps. Pam Snyder, Eddie Day Pashinski, Tony DeLuca and Jennifer O'Mara*

Ends the 19th century practice of having Election Day on one Tuesday and allow people to vote up to a month in advance of the scheduled Election Day at designated locations. This is already happening in 40 other states. Say goodbye to long lines, overburdened poll workers and overwhelmed, obsolete voting machines.

## **Your Mailbox is Your Ballot Box**

*Sponsored by Rep. Rob Matzie*

Helps every voter, but especially police officers, firefighters, medical personnel and other voters who can't find time to cast a ballot, by allowing everyone to submit their ballot by mail. It's secure, safe and every registered voter gets a ballot sent to them so turnout will go up - like it already has in Oregon, Washington and Colorado.

## **The Ballot Comes to You**

*Sponsored by Rep. Liz Hanbidge*

Requires poll workers to bring ballots to the vehicles of seniors, people with disabilities or temporary injuries who came to the polling place but cannot make it inside.

## **Cure For Cursive**

*Sponsored by Rep. Mike Schlossberg*

Allows people whose signatures aren't as crisp and precise as they once were to submit an updated signature for the voting book.

## **My Vote is My Business**

*Sponsored jointly by Reps. Brian Sims and Neal Goodman*

Takes the burden of proof off the voter seeking an absentee ballot to provide a reason for needing one.

## **Your Vote Shouldn't Cost You Your Job**

*Sponsored by Rep. Mary Isaacson*

Requires employers to offer paid or no-fault unpaid leave for workers to get to their polling place to cast a ballot.

## **More Time for Absentees**

*Sponsored by Rep. Tina Davis*

Gives more time to submit absentee ballots to allow voters to be heard.

## **Election Day is a Holiday**

*Sponsored by Rep. Mary Jo Daley*

Helps increase turnout by making Primary Election Day and General Election Day a state holiday.



## **Show Up and Vote**

*Sponsored by Rep. Ryan Bizzarro*

Increases voter turnout by allowing same-day registration. Voters can register and vote with a provisional ballot at their local polling place on election day, instead of requiring preregistration weeks in advance.

## **Future Voters**

*Sponsored by Rep. Brandon Markosek*

Energizes young voters to take part by getting them preregistered at age 16 or 17 and reminding them about voting at age 18.

## **Click Here to Register**

*Sponsored by Rep. Mary Jo Daley*

Turns Gov. Tom Wolf's 2015 executive action allowing online voter registration into a law so no future governor beholden to special interests could take it away.

## **You're Registered**

*Sponsored by Rep. Sara Innamorato*

Automatically registers every qualified citizen interacting with Pennsylvania government to vote. Driver's licenses, benefit applications, any interaction gets you registered to vote unless you say "no."

## **You Move, Your Vote Moves With You**

*Sponsored by Rep. Joe Webster*

Automatically moves a person's registration with them if they move to a new house in Pennsylvania. Right now even if you move across the street you need to file new paperwork.

## **The People's Voice**

*Three separate bills sponsored by Reps. Gerald Mullery, Perry Warren and Kevin Boyle*

Requires so-called "dark money" to be brought into the light to allow all people to see who's behind those negative TV commercials, web ads and robocalls.

## **Protect America – Show Your Taxes**

*Sponsored by Rep. Tim Briggs*

Requires all candidates for president of the United States and governor of Pennsylvania to release their tax returns so the people can know about any financial issues that might conflict with serving the people.

## **Corporations Aren't People**

*Sponsored by Rep. Frank Dermody*

Calls on Congress to change the law allowing special interests to bankroll elections in secret so the people know who's paying to influence elections.

## **Government for the People**

*Sponsored by Rep. Frank Dermody*

Puts limits on the money special interests can spend on Pennsylvania elections.

## **Fix Our Elections**

*Sponsored by Rep. Chris Rabb*

A single bill that brings all these ideas together.



**2/26/19 House Democratic Policy Committee Roundtable Discussion**

Hilda Gonzalez  
Founder/Director

Interlace Cultural y Desarrollo Integral Mexicano de Lehigh Valley, Inc.

Some of the remarkable suggestions I have heard from people in the community.

1. There is lack of information about the documents that serve as identification to vote.
2. There is lack of information on where to go to vote.
3. Explanation to the constituents of the Political Proposals.
4. Greater exposure of the candidates and their proposals.
5. Make the voting process more agile at the voting centers.
6. Bilingual signs indicating that the voting place is nearby.
7. Bilingual assistance at the voting centers.

# Voting Rights Advocates Sue Pennsylvania to End Disenfranchisement of Absentee Voters

November 13, 2018

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HARRISBURG, PA. - Voting rights advocates filed a lawsuit today challenging a Pennsylvania law that makes it difficult for voters to vote by absentee ballot. The plaintiffs include nine Pennsylvania residents, all of whom applied for absentee ballots on time but received the ballots either too close to or after Pennsylvania's restrictive deadline for returning the ballots.

Pennsylvania law allows voters to apply for an absentee ballot up until a week before Election Day but requires that ballots be received by county election bureaus by 5 p.m. on the Friday before Election Day. According to the lawsuit, which was filed in Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court, Pennsylvania has the earliest deadline in the nation for returning absentee ballots. Other than Louisiana and Mississippi, every other state allows voters to submit their absentee ballots on Election Day or to have them postmarked by that date and delivered later.

The voters are represented by Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; the ACLU of Pennsylvania, which is also a plaintiff in the suit; the ACLU's Voting Rights Project; and other volunteer attorneys. The lawsuit asks the court to overturn the unreasonably early deadline for returning absentee ballots because it is a violation of the Pennsylvania Constitution's guarantees of "free and equal" elections and equal protection under the law.

"Pennsylvania's deadline for returning absentee ballots stands as one of the most restrictive in the nation," said Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. "Every election cycle, it disenfranchises countless voters across the state who are fully eligible but simply unable to meet the restrictive time frame for requesting and returning an absentee ballot. This law has the starkest impact on those voters who seek an absentee ballot around the time of the deadline. We will continue to turn to the courts to beat back unnecessary obstacles imposed by states on voters."

"Thousands of Pennsylvanians have been denied their fundamental right to vote because of this early deadline for returning an absentee ballot," said Reggie Shuford, executive director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania. "Meanwhile, other states have shown that they can fairly administer absentee voting while receiving ballots up to Election Day and even beyond. The Friday deadline is completely unnecessary, and people miss their chance to have their votes counted because of it."

According to a report by the Philadelphia Inquirer in August 2018, Pennsylvania rejected more than 2,000 absentee ballots in the 2014 election, 86 percent of which were due to missing the return deadline.

The nine plaintiffs include traveling professionals who are frequently away from home, workers whose employment obligations make it impossible to vote in person on Election Day, and out-of-state college students. They are residents of counties throughout Pennsylvania, including Allegheny, Berks, Butler, Clarion, Juniata, Montgomery, Perry, and York.

"I am disappointed that my vote and my husband's vote didn't count in the past election and, more importantly, concerned that this will happen again to us or others," said Cassandra Adams Jones, one of the voters who filed the lawsuit after she was unable to vote in Clarion County. "Because of

our occupations, we travel often and may have to vote by absentee ballot again, but I have zero confidence that our votes will count if we have to use that method in the future.”

The plaintiffs are represented by Witold Walczak and Molly Tack-Hooper of the ACLU of Pennsylvania; Sophia Lin Lakin and Adriel Cepeda Derieux of the ACLU’s Voting Rights Project; and Ezra Rosenberg, John Powers, and Pooja Chaudhuri of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

The complaint is available at [aclupa.org/Torres](https://www.aclupa.org/Torres).