

League of Women Voters of Indiana County

October 8, 2020

Pennsylvania Representative Jim Struzzi
550 Philadelphia Street
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15701

Dear Representative Struzzi:

This letter is in reference to House Resolution 1032.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County, we request you not support House Resolution 1032. And, we request you pass meaningful legislation that will facilitate the democratic process of voting.

In brief, House Resolution 1032 proposes to establish a “Select Committee on Election Integrity” composed of three Republican representatives and two Democrat representatives to investigate, review, and make findings and recommendations concerning absentee and mail-in ballots before, during and after the 2020 general election.

First, House Resolution No. 1032 is perceived as a partisan attack on the integrity of the elections in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Other perceptions include the attempt to increase the apprehension and confusion of Pennsylvania voters, and cast doubt on the ability of Indiana County Election Officials and the Pennsylvania Department of State to ensure an accessible election with trustworthy results.

Second, House Resolution No. 1032 undermines the authority of Indiana County election officials and the Pennsylvania Department of State to administer safe, secure and non-partisan elections. Our election officials in Indiana County, Commissioner Keith, Commissioner Gorman, Commissioner Hess, and Chief Clerk Robin Maryai have worked strategically and tirelessly to ensure that our elections are safe and secure. Their communications with Indiana County citizens have been ongoing and transparent.

Third, House Resolution No. 1032 is redundant to existing legal structures including the following bi-partisan election reform bills:

1. Act 77 of 2019: Provided options for Pennsylvanians to continue to vote in-person or if preferred, vote by mail as well as made voting more accessible and secure by addressing voter registration deadlines, mail-in voting procedures, and new voting system purchases;
2. Act 12 of 2020: Legislative changes in consideration of COVID-19 pandemic; and
3. Act 35 of 2020: Analysis of June 3, 2020 Primary Election with recommendations to ensure a safe secure and accessible November 3, 2020 General Election; The Department of State provided a report on August 1, 2020 with recommendations for legislative changes that have not been acted upon including the pre-canvassing of ballots, a recommendation of the Bipartisan Policy Center Task Force on Elections.

For your information, noted below is a summary of the comments and recommendations of members of the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County.

- Citizens of Pennsylvania want a clear and secure process for casting their ballots in this general election, especially considering the health concerns that the pandemic presents. House Resolution 1032, in creating a Select Committee on Election Integrity, adds another layer of confusion to an already confused election season.
- There is already a bipartisan body to review election law.
- The structure proposed for a Select Committee on Election Integrity is not non-partisan and will not ensure fairness in the evaluation of voting and the vote-counting processes.
- Support the priority that counties themselves have expressed: the need for more pre-canvassing time.
- Propose a law that allows the counting of mail-in ballots ahead of election day so that voters know the results in a timely fashion.
- Allow counties to pre-canvass mail-in votes in the weeks before Election Day.
- Propose legislation to enable the pre-canvassing of absentee and mail-in votes in the weeks prior to the November 3, 2020 General Election Day (i.e., Inspection and opening of all envelopes containing official absentee ballots or mail-in ballots including the removal of such ballots from the envelopes and the counting, computing and tallying of the votes reflected on the ballots. The term “pre-canvassing” does not include the recording or publishing of the votes reflected on the ballots).
- We need to make voting as easy and accessible as possible. And, if no other states with successful mail-in voting have the extra layer of "security" (the outer envelope), then we don't need it either, especially if it risks invalidating someone's vote.
- The primary responsibility of the General Assembly should be to guarantee their constituents a fair election with few obstructive roadblocks (security envelopes required).
- Mail-in voting has real public health benefits; Please stop discouraging our citizenry from using this voting option.

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania has also issued a Statement on House Resolution 1032.

In closing, the members of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County will continue to educate voters and increase voter participation as well as make every effort to ensure that our citizens vote safely and securely in Indiana County.

Sincerely,
Anne E. Simmons, President
League of Women Voters of Indiana County
Telephone: 724-465-2824
Email: lwvindianacounty@gmail.com