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Leading Advocacy Organizations Launch Keystone Votes Coalition, Campaign to Update PA's Elections

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Today, leading state, local, and national advocacy and community organizations joined together to launch Keystone Votes – The Coalition for Modern Elections. This nonpartisan coalition will serve as the vehicle for their coordinated public education and advocacy campaign to update Pennsylvania's election system.

“For many Pennsylvania voters, our elections work well,” said Susan Carty, board president for the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania. “But low voter turnout compels us to look for ways to update our election system to make it work better.”

Pennsylvania ranked 29th nationally in voter participation in the 2012 election. In the general election held earlier this month, fewer than 25 percent of registered voters participated in picking mayors, county commissioners, judges and other leaders of our state.

“The judges and Justices elected two weeks ago will play a critical role in deciding issues that affect all of us for years to come, including our schools, our systems of justice and our lives,” said Karen Buck, executive director of SeniorLAW Center. “The fact that these leaders were chosen by just a quarter of our electorate underscores the need to update our election system to find ways to enable greater voter participation and reflect how we, the voters, live today.”

Keystone Votes will be educating members of the General Assembly, stakeholders and the public about updates that will make voting easier and more convenient and ensure all citizens—particularly seniors, veterans and Pennsylvanians with disabilities—have an equal opportunity to make their voices heard.

“Increasing flexibility and choice reduces barriers to voting, ensuring equal access,” added Sara Mullen, associate director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania. “All voters, even voters who have never missed an election, would welcome more flexibility and choice in deciding when and how to cast their votes.”

States across the country have already taken steps to update their voting systems. Pennsylvania can learn from their experiences and adopt updates that have been tested and proven. Importantly, these updates have garnered broad support among Republicans and Democrats alike.

“We know these updates work, they won’t be too costly and they’ll preserve the integrity of our elections,” said Erin Casey, executive director of Pennsylvania Voice. “We also know that these updates have been supported by leaders from both parties in states across the country.”

Keystone Votes will educate lawmakers, stakeholders and the public about four important updates that have been successful in giving voters more choice and flexibility, reducing barriers and increasing turnout in states across the country. These four updates are:

- Optional vote by mail
- In-person early voting
- Same-day registration
- Youth Preregistration

“We know we don’t have a monopoly on good ideas,” added Stephanie Monahan, director of PennPIRG. “We’re interested in working with legislators to enact any policy that modernizes and strengthens Pennsylvania’s elections.”

In the weeks and months ahead, Keystone Votes and its members will be reaching out to educate policymakers—especially in Harrisburg—about the need to update our election system and solicit their ideas for other ideas to modernize our election system. Through that process, Keystone Votes will seek to identify members of both parties willing to reach across the aisle and work together on common sense updates.

“Updating Pennsylvania’s election system isn’t just good policy, it’s also good politics,” said Barry Kauffman, executive director of Common Cause Pennsylvania. “In an era of extreme partisanship in Harrisburg, updating our election system provides an important opportunity for legislators to show they can work together to get things done for the people.”

About Keystone Votes

Keystone Votes is a coalition of state, local, and national advocacy and community organizations that are joining together to launch a coordinated campaign to update Pennsylvania's election system. Our members represent communities across Pennsylvania from seniors, women and working people to immigrants and faith leaders. Coalition members also include leading Pennsylvania-based and national voting advocates and election administration experts. The Keystone Votes coalition is staffed by Pennsylvania Voice and strategy decisions are made by its voting reform and election administration (VREA) workgroup. We have 29 members and we are continuing to grow as organizations across Pennsylvania join our effort. To learn more, please go to www.KeystoneVotes.com.