



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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May 20, 2020

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Statement Responding to Allegheny County GOP Members Release

PITTSBURGH – County Solicitor Andrew Szefi and Elections Division Manager David Voye provided the following statement in response to the release issued yesterday by members of the Allegheny County Republican House delegation:

From Mr. Voye:

“The steps taken by Allegheny County, its Elections Division and the Board of Elections neither disenfranchise voters nor endanger public health. These steps, instead, are intended to encourage the greatest number of voters to participate in the June 2 Primary Election while also protecting public health.”

From Mr. Szefi:

“Act 12 of 2020 established certain emergency provisions for the conduct of the 2020 Primary Election, currently scheduled for June 2. Among its provisions, Article XVIII-B specifically authorizes Boards of Elections to consolidate polling places to no more than a 60% reduction of polling places in the county, **“...except for necessitous circumstances and as approved by the Department of State.”** (1802-B (3)).

“The Allegheny County Board of Elections sought and received approval for a polling place reduction plan from the Department of State precisely because of such necessitous circumstances. As set forth in the Board’s resolution and accompanying outline of the plan, the circumstances included notification from members of local election boards that they would not serve, or were reluctant to serve, on Election Day; that buildings used as polling places were no longer available to use due to COVID-19 concerns; and that the response to the mail-in ballot option had been so successful that the number of voters participating through in-person voting would be far less than in prior elections.

“The county did not move forward without approval. Its Elections officials received a verbal approval from the department last week allowing the division to move forward with publicizing the polling places. The formal, written approval was received on Monday.”

Also from Mr. Voye:

“CDC guidelines are being followed for the June 2 election.

“The first recommendation is to encourage moving election polling locations away from long-term care facilities and facilities housing older persons to minimize COVID-19 exposure among older individuals and those with chronic medical conditions. This has been done with the consolidation of polling places.

“Voters should be encouraged to use voting methods that minimize direct contact with other people, including mail-in ballots. As of yesterday, the number of people who have applied for a mail-in or absentee ballot has reached nearly 225,000 (over 28% turn out). This effort has reduced crowd size at polling stations as well and the 416 voting districts (31% of “typical” voting districts) also allow us to better monitor physical distancing and other mitigation measures.

“We were thrilled to see the Republican Party itself taken advantage of mail-in voting as many applications first received by the Elections Division were as a result of a mailing sent by the party to voters in the county and throughout the state.

“Finally, for polling places, workers should stay at home if they’re sick, practice hand hygiene frequently, practice routine cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces, disinfect surfaces, and clean and disinfect voting-associated equipment. In addition to infection prevention kits, there will also be printed guidance for all workers.”

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Jerry Tyskiewicz, Director

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