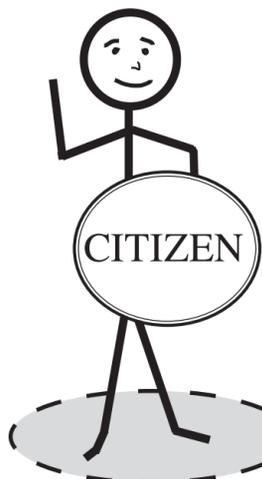


CITIZEN TO VOTER TO ELECTOR: Direct Pathway and Obstacles We Must Eliminate



Register to vote.

BUYING ELECTED OFFICES

Candidates and their special interests are buying offices. Money – having it, raising it, spending it – should definitely not be the deciding factor in a candidate being elected. If voters are following these high-stakes advertisements like sheep, then woe is us.

Citizens must look behind candidates to see who is backing them and why.

Lately, special interests have been backing candidates with extreme social or religious views, to rile the public, get the candidate elected, and get votes for their own non-religious, non-social, often pecuniary initiatives.

Citizens United slingshotted the whole matter into overdrive, to mix a metaphor.

The only reason corporations were ever deemed to be “persons” was so they could be legally bound by contracts they might sign. They do not vote. They cannot be thrown in jail when guilty of crimes. They do not die a natural death. And now they fairly well own a large portion of our government.

We need to put “truth in advertising” laws into effect.

Money should not be a means of obtaining elected office, regardless where it comes from.

If someone knocks on your door with a ballot petition, and you are eligible to sign, open the door and sign the petition! Do not be one who says, “I don’t sign anything anymore!” Participate in the electoral process – ballot and nominating petitions allow candidates to get their names on the ballot. It is not easy to get the requisite number of signatures – especially if the candidate is (a) not a Republican or Democrat (more signatures are required, later in the election cycle), or (b) not one with a lot of political cronies, not an “Old Boy,” not someone who snaps fingers and gets signatures. If you are eligible, sign!

We need to get back to some of the better parts of the days of the whistle-stop tour, and get our candidates into active debates and forums before the public. We should limit advertising periods prior to elections. Voters should seek information reported by impartial media (not talk radio, not propaganda, not biased reporting). A revitalized, impartial, active Fourth Estate could go a long way.

We must teach our children (and our parents) to vote intelligently, to participate in their government as much as possible, and not to think of elected officials as knowing better than anyone else.

By all means, we should not vote for someone just because the name is familiar!

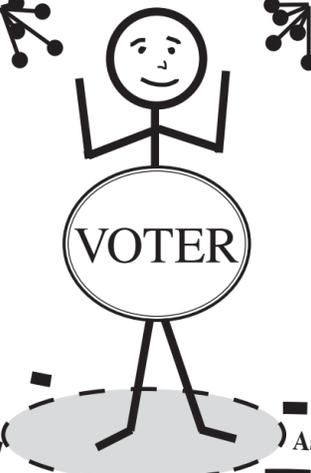
HAREBRAINED SCHEMES

We bought new voting machines (see the column “Inappropriate Voting Systems”) from companies owned by brothers, friends of the author of the bill that put \$4 billion into the machines. That legislator was found guilty in the Abramoff to-do. The machines were not new, were not ready for the new standards, and are still not good.

Parties, candidates, organizations, PACs, and others continually send emails intended to incite, with subjects such as “hateful,” “despicable,” “awful,” and the emails always say “send money now” in order to fix whatever that other person did that is so horrible. We should stop doing this, right away.

Vote By Mail is a very bad idea. It is too open to corruption. “Bring your ballots to work tomorrow, we’ll vote!” “Honey, come in the kitchen, let’s see how you’ll vote!” “Ten bucks if you let me help you vote!”

Electronic voting is a horrible idea. Casting ballots by phone, fax, or Internet is unconscionable. PA S.B. 976 proposes military and overseas voters cast ballots electronically. Nothing could be more unsecure and hackable - Internet providers in foreign countries are often monopolies, arms of the governments, and/or untrustworthy entities. And face it, the NSA could hack your vote, too. Veterans, current



military, and computer scientists speak emphatically against this method of casting ballots. Votes could be captured, changed, and re-sent in at least three places during their transmission. This is no way for anyone to vote.

- Uninformed elected and other governmental officials often think voters’ rights advocates are tin-foil-hatted lunatics, even though numerous experts agree and whole states have revised their policy based on the same information. Some elected officials feel they want to hear a louder outcry from the general (non-lunatic) public. (Apparently three or four lawsuits in Pennsylvania alone, numerous books, hours of online videos, and reams and reams of testimony at all levels are not enough for them, they want “public outcry.”)
- Please make an outcry.

When legislators and other officials give the reason “because all the other states are doing it,” “because every county agrees with me on this one,” or “because they won’t do it right without this,” be immediately skeptical. Most often they are ill-advised and downright wrong, not only in giving flimsy excuses, but about the facts behind them.

Remember, the government is us!

POLITICAL POLARIZATION

It is time for Democrats and Republicans (and Republicans and Democrats) to stop advocating extreme positions, stop preaching, stop baiting each other and also the voters, and stop focusing on what divides them. It is time to focus on running the country.

The purpose of government is to improve the quality of life (not quantity of wealth) of the citizenry, the communities, the states, and the country. Period.

Pennsylvania does not offer equal ballot access to members of all political parties. Some candidates must obtain only 2,000 signatures to secure a place on the ballot, while others running for the same office may be required to get tens of thousands of signatures, and cannot actually run for the office until some six months after other candidates have begun.

True democracy requires Green Party, Libertarian, Constitution, or any other party members, or Independents, have equal access to the ballot.

Petition challenges have become an abuse of power. Spurious petition challenges put forth by sometimes wealthier or more powerful candidates are a distraction, an unnecessary expense, and often just an additional way of torturing “minor” party candidates. Your own mother’s signature on a petition could be thrown out on flimsy (untrue) evidence.

Same-day voter registration is a bad idea. If an individual has not known or has not had the foresight to register to vote, how can that person possibly cast a responsible ballot for well-considered candidate choices?

On the other hand, if we are going to give primary elections to the two wealthiest parties (and not to the others), perhaps we should consider same-day party changes.

According to *Scientific American* magazine, in an article several years ago, “ranked voting” is a more appropriate method of electing the candidate whom we collectively most desire. Some localities have adopted ranked or instant run-off voting. We should consider it.

Smear campaigns are a very bad idea. We must teach each other not to pay attention to anything said in such advertisements and speeches and dogmatic restatements on talk radio and other venues. If we don’t have something nice to say about someone, we shouldn’t say anything.

We must apply pressure to find agreement, and to get the job done.

Yes, our old lever voting machines were nice. They were not secure from tampering, although one hack couldn’t take down the whole county’s vote. But we should not bring them back, even though some counties used paper records with them.

INAPPROPRIATE VOTING SYSTEMS

The Help America Vote Act (“HAVA”) was a very bad law, and we will be living with its consequences for a long time.

Neither the federal nor the state “certification” of voting machines and systems before we use them verifies that they work correctly, count accurately, are safe from tampering, or are free from bad software. No one looks for any of that.



In 2001, for the coming computerized voting systems, Pennsylvania actually (1) reduced the number of voting system examiners, (2) reduced the level of their responsibility, and (3) enabled examiners to hold interests in voting machine companies (previously forbidden).

Pennsylvania counties did not buy the (better) only machines certified under the deadline in 2005. Instead, they waited for and bought from the rushed late certification of unsecure, inaccessible, unrecountable systems without paper ballots to recount.

Three-quarters of Pennsylvania counties (85% of voters) vote on unrecountable systems (even some similar to Commodore 64 computers). Venango County tried to hold a forensic audit in a close race, but it cannot be done.

We use faith-based voting: we believe that when we touch a name on a screen a vote goes to that person. We have no proof, and most of us have nothing tangible to recount after the fact.

Lawsuits filed have been dismissed for no good reason, or have been lost, e.g., for judges believing witnesses whose charities were given donations in return for their testimony that all was well when it clearly was not. - *Kuznik v. Westmoreland County - Celeste Taylor, et al. v. Onorato, et al.* - *Banfield, et al., v. Secretary of State, et al. (on appeal)*

The suits drag on and on while the state and counties allowed more and more elections under ignominious circumstances.

Advocates have made the mistake of believing that common sense and knowledge would prevail, if only the facts were stated clearly.

The machines on which we vote have been breached, can be hacked. Just look up Ed Felten, Harri Hursti, Stephen Spoonamore, and others.

Ohio banned the unrecountable machines, and so did California. Centre County, Pa., banned them, too – in fact, Ohio’s report was written by folks at Penn State University.

Dan Rather did a *60 Minutes* expose on the third-world production standards used in making our voting machines. Quality control, he reported, consists of shaking the machines.

THE FIX: a lot of money, officials’ open eyes, ears and minds, and knowledge above all.

© 2014 VoteAllegheny. Chart by Audrey N. Glickman, a voter and executive officer of VoteAllegheny. Meant only as a guideline, a basis for discussion, not a complete reference.



May the best candidate be elected!

Express opinions.

DISCRIMINATION AND DISENFRANCHISEMENT

Active attempts to discriminate by race, age, gender, finances, nation of origin, religion, gender identity, ability, etc., affect voting.

Poll taxes and their equivalent: no one should ever have to pay for the right of voting. Even being late for work because of long lines in less affluent precincts is a kind of a poll tax.

Literacy tests and their equivalent: citizens of all abilities and disabilities must be permitted and encouraged to vote independently to the full extent of our ability to provide.

Rather than permitting gerrymandering, all states should be divided – as some already are – into even, rectilinear districts drawn by independent councils.

Voter ID mandates are mal-intended diversions, costing money (over \$10 million so far in Pennsylvania) and doing only harm.

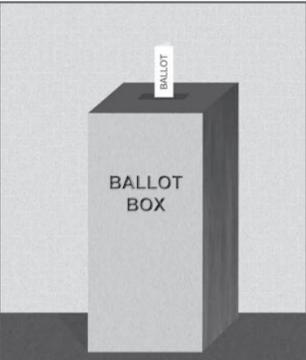
Fake-outs – anyone who distributes literature that advises that certain persons should vote on another day or at another time or place from the correct day and time and place – should be tossed into prison.

Forced crowding, waiting, and discomfort must be seriously reduced: for instance, too few machines in less-affluent precincts, polling places located in buildings without heating, cooling, power, etc.

Vaguely accessible voting machines – where, for instance, it takes a blind voter 45 minutes or an hour to cast a ballot because of the convoluted system, or a wheelchair-bound person cannot reach the “Vote” button – must be replaced with those we know companies can make, such that even sip-and-puff-capable voters can cast an independent ballot.

There are statutes in Pennsylvania that govern elections. Too often we (our elected officials and government employees) ignore them, bypass them, or delete them even though they have meaning and purpose. We must not presume that anyone “knows what they are doing” in ignoring the law, because usually they know not.

Discrimination can manifest a veiled method of attacking one political party or the other, rather than an expression of outright prejudice. Either way, we don’t want it, we won’t have it, we will stand together against it.



THE FIX: fairness, fully scrutinized and obeyed laws, vigilance, and knowledge above all.

Get involved. Learn about the candidates. Attend debates and forums. Meet the candidates. Discuss the election. Make wise choices.

Engage with elected officials. Watch legislation, initiatives, judgments. Watch special interests. Keep your neighbors engaged. Express opinions.

Assist campaigns.

Engage with elected officials.

Watch legislation, initiatives, judgments.

Watch special interests.

Keep your neighbors engaged.

THE FIX: education, foresight, independent thinking, public outcry, and knowledge above all.

THE FIX: sanity, broad-mindedness, decorum, and knowledge above all.