



## Fast Facts

### Voting in PA, What's Next?

#### Significant Implications of Act 77 of 2019

On October 31, 2019, Governor Wolf signed Act 77 to promote a convenient and secure voting opportunity for Pennsylvanians. Act 77, which went into effect starting with the April 2020 primary election, established the following:

##### **No excuse mail- in voting**

Pennsylvanians are now able to vote by mail without providing a reason. Previously, voters were required to provide a reason for voting by absentee ballots.

##### **50 day mail-in period**

All voters can submit their mail-in or absentee ballots up to 50 days before an election.

##### **15 more days to register to vote**

Voters are now authorized to register to vote 15 days from an election. Previously, voters had to register 30 days before an election.

##### **Extends mail-in and absentee submission deadlines**

Voters can submit mail-in and absentee ballots until 8:00 pm on Election Day. Previously, the deadline was 5:00 pm on the Friday before an election.

##### **Establishes a permanent mail-in and absentee ballot list**

This law allows voters to receive mail-in or absentee ballot applications for all primary, general and special elections.

##### **Authorizes a \$90 billion bond**

This law authorized a \$90 million bond, which will be used to help counties fund the purchase of modern election infrastructure, as directed by the Pennsylvania Department of State (DOS).

#### Coronavirus v. Elections

##### **PA pays for postage**

To make voting accessible and safe during the novel COVID-19 pandemic, DOS [announced](#) that it will provide funding for postage, so all eligible voters can return their mail-in and absentee ballots at no cost to the voter. This funding will only be provided for the 2020 general election.

Currently, DOS is working with individual counties to develop an efficient method to implement this initiative.

##### **Funding from the Federal Government**

To protect the 2020 election cycle from the effects of the pandemic, the federal government allocated \$14,223,603 to Pennsylvania, through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Out of the federal funding provided, \$6 million was further distributed to counties to support increased expenses related to coronavirus. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Voter notification and education
- Increased cost related to the commonwealth's vote by mail system
- Supplies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19
- Increased cost for equipment, staffing, training

## Proposed reform ahead of the 2020 general election

As we approach the 2020 general election, many members of the General Assembly have expressed concerns regarding the commonwealth's current electoral system. Specifically, some members do not believe the commonwealth can accommodate the expected large number of mail-in ballots. Consequently, many members have expressed the need to amend the Elections Code to allow for canvassing before Election Day.

In addition, many members and stakeholders have expressed the need to further extend the mail-in and absentee voting deadline following a [letter](#) received by the United States Postal Service. The letter indicates that the commonwealth's current vote by mail deadlines could make it difficult for ballots to be delivered on time.

## Updating the Commonwealth's election infrastructure

In April 2018, DOS issued a directive mandating all future voting machines to include a voter-verifiable paper ballot or some form of paper record for each vote cast at the polling place. According to the Wolf Administration, the new systems have enhanced security to prevent hacking and will produce a paper trail that will allow for accurate recounts and audits when necessary.

DOS instructed Pennsylvania counties to select new certified voting systems by Dec. 31, 2019. As of August 10, 2020, all 67 counties throughout the commonwealth have taken official steps to replace their voting systems that are not compliant with state and federal standards. In 2019, 45 counties used their new voting systems, according to DOS.<sup>1</sup> As mentioned above, Act 77 allocates \$90,000,000, to reimburse counties for roughly 60 percent of the cost to purchase new voting machines.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.votespa.com/About-Elections/Pages/New-Voting-Systems.aspx>

