

Survey of Elected Officials and Candidates about the Voting Process
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Press Release
For Immediate Release

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Survey Shows Broad Candidate Support for Verifiable Voting Machines and Competitive Districts

(State College, PA) - Thanks to a recent survey by a non-partisan citizens group, Centre County voters will be able to cast their votes based on how the candidates will act to protect the voting and electoral process in Pennsylvania. Candidates were asked by Concerned Voters of Centre County (CVCC) for their position on providing voting machines with a verifiable paper trail, creating competitive electoral districts and requiring voter identification at the polls.

Mary Vollero of CVCC says the survey “shows everybody who responded supports paper ballots and the people who didn’t respond aren’t so concerned about election integrity.” Earlier this year two Centre County Commissioners, Republicans Chris Exarchos and Steven Dershem voted to provide voters with machines without a paper trail. Exarchos cited cost and ease of use as the reason. Neither Exarchos nor Dershem responded to the citizen survey. Both are up for re-election in 2007. Democratic County Commissioner Scott Conklin voted against providing machines without a verifiable paper trail. He is now a candidate for election in the 77th District to the State House of Representatives on November 7th.

Respondents unanimously favored establishing compact electoral districts that are competitive rather than “safe.” Survey organizer Christopher Lee said “In the past, voters chose their elected officials. Nowadays with politicized redistricting, elected officials chose their voters. What should be a competitive free market of political ideas becomes a rigged system with no incentive for the safe candidate to come up with innovative public policies.”

The full poll and the candidates’ responses can be viewed at <http://concernedvoters.org/> . For further information contact Christopher Lee at 814-466-9266 or CGL104@adelphia.net.

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Background, Objectives and Methodology

In September 2006, citizens concerned about the voting process in Centre County sent a survey by email and by hard copy to elected officials and candidates for public office whose districts included Centre County. The purpose of the survey was to discover candidates' positions on the voting process and so to provide valid information to Centre County voters to get the results they intend when they vote in the November 7 election.

The survey asked respondents to answer six questions about the voting process. They were asked to indicate if they would or would not support legislation

1. to require:
 - a. voting machines that provided a paper trail,
 - b. non-political redistricting to eliminate "safe" districts,
 - c. a national primary day,
 - d. providing an adequate number of voting machines in each precinct so voters don't have to wait in long lines to vote,
2. and to ban:
 - a. requirements for picture and registration identification at the polls and
 - b. media predictions of election outcomes before polls are closed.

Respondents were also asked for any open-ended comments on each question and on the voting process in general.

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Respondents

1. Governor
 - a. Edward Rendell, Democrat, Incumbent
 - b. Lynn Swann, Republican, no response
2. U.S Senator
 - a. Robert Casey, Democrat, no response
 - b. Rick Santorum, Republican, no response
3. US Congress, 5th District
 - a. John Peterson, Republican, Incumbent, no response
 - b. Don Hilliard, Democrat
4. State Senate, 34th District
 - a. Jake Corman, Republican, Incumbent
 - b. Jon Eich, Democrat
5. State House of Representatives, 77th District
 - a. Scott Conklin, Democrat
 - b. Barbara Spencer, Republican
6. Surveys were not sent to State Representatives Benninghoff and Hanna, who are unopposed. However, Representative Benninghoff did answer after all and his response has been incorporated into the report.
7. Centre County Commissioner (election is in 2007)
 - a. Chris Exarchos, Republican, Incumbent, no response
 - b. Steven Dershem, Republican, Incumbent, no response
 - c. Scott Conklin, Democrat, Incumbent, his answers are under 77th district, State House of Representatives

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Executive Summary

Four of six respondents to the survey gave unqualified support for voting machines with a paper trail. The other two gave qualified support. Democratic Governor Edward Rendell wrote “I would sign a law requiring a paper trail if it is affordable and works with our existing voting machines.” Republican State House candidate Barbara Spencer wrote she supported machines with a paper trail but “I’m concerned about the paper trail. Does it provide enough privacy for total anonymity?”

This broad support for voting machines with a paper trail contradicts the action taken in August of this year by two Centre County Commissioners, Republicans Christopher Exarchos and Steven Dershem. They voted to provide electronic touch screen voting machines without a paper trail to Centre County voters, saying the touch screen machines were cheaper and easier. Democratic Commissioner Scott Conklin voted against providing the machines without paper trails.

Respondents unanimously favored establishing electoral districts that are competitive, rather than “safe districts” such as now exist in many areas of Pennsylvania. With safe districts, Republican voters are clustered in one district and Democratic voters clustered in the adjacent district. This assures little or no competition for the incumbents of either party.

On the question of banning the requirement that voters supply picture identification at the polls and banning media reporting of the results before the polls close, most candidates favored the bans, with the exception of Republicans Jake Corman and Barbara Spencer who did not favor the bans, citing concerns about voter fraud and freedom of the press.

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Table 1: Survey of Elected Officials about the Voting Process, October 2006

The Questions: Please indicate if you will support legislation that will:										
1	Require that voting machines have a paper trail that is verifiable by the individual voter and by election officials at the end of the voting day against machine totals.									
2	Require non-political commissions to create districts that are both competitive and geographically compact, not deliberately safe for one party.									
3	Establish a day on which all the states hold their primary elections – a national primary day.									
4	Require that enough (an adequate number of) voting machines be supplied for all voting precincts so that voters do not suffer time duress.									
5	Ban requirement of picture or registration identification of the voter.									
6	Ban media predictions of election outcomes before polls are closed.									
The Answers:		Governor of Pennsylvania		US Congress, 5th District		State Senate 34th District		State House of Representatives		
								77th District		171st District
		Rendell	Swann	Hilliard	Peterson	Eich	Cor-man	Conklin	Spencer	Benninghoff
1	Paper trail	yes*	no reply	yes	no reply	yes	yes	yes	yes*	yes
2	Competitive districts	yes	no reply	yes	no reply	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
3	National primary day	no	no reply	yes	no reply	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
4	Adequate voting machines	yes	no reply	yes	no reply	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
5	Ban picture ID	*	no reply	yes	no reply	yes	no	yes	no	no
6	Ban media predictions	yes	no reply	yes	no reply	yes	no	yes	no	yes

* = answer is qualified by further comment. See attached full report.

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The Full Questionnaire as sent to the elected officials and candidates:

Survey of Elected Officials about the Voting Process

You seek and/or hold public office. We represent a group of concerned voters in Centre County, Pennsylvania, whose votes will be strongly influenced by your response to the questions below about the voting process. Thank you for taking the time to consider and answer our questions. Please answer yes or no to each question. Your further comments are also welcome. Please reply by attaching this document, with your answers, to mail or email. Please mail Christopher Lee: PO Box 174, Boalsburg, PA 16827; or email to CGL104@adelphia.net as soon as possible and no later than October 12.

Please indicate if you will support legislation that will:

Require that voting machines have a paper trail that is verifiable by the individual voter and by election officials at the end of the voting day against machine totals.

Yes. No. Comment: _____

Require non-political commissions to create districts that are both competitive and geographically compact, not deliberately safe for one party.

Yes. No. Comment: _____

Establish a day on which all the states hold their primary elections – a national primary day.

Yes. No. Comment: _____

Require that enough voting machines be supplied for all voting precincts so that voters do not suffer time duress.

Yes. No. Comment: _____

Ban requirement of picture or registration identification of the voter.

Yes. No. Comment: _____

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Ban media predictions of election outcomes before polls are closed.
Yes. No. Comment: _____

Do you have any other comments or ideas on these topics?

Thank you for participating. Your answers (or the lack thereof) and the results of this survey will be published in a news release and on the internet.

Thank you for participating. Your answers (or the lack thereof) and the results of this survey will be published in a news release and on the internet.

Nancy Crane, 378 Bradley Ave., State College, PA 16801, 410-268-0467

Christopher Lee, PO Box 174, Boalsburg, PA 16827, 814-466-9266

-End of Questionnaire sent to elected officials and candidates.-

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Detailed responses, per respondent:

Governor candidates:

Edward Rendell, Democrat, Incumbent Governor

1. Require that voting machines have a paper trail that is verifiable by the individual voter and by election officials at the end of the voting day against machine totals.

Neither yes nor no:

I would sign a law requiring a paper trail if it is affordable and works with our existing voting machines.

2. Require non-political commissions to create districts that are both competitive and geographically compact, not deliberately safe for one party.

Yes

I strongly support the creation of an independent nonpartisan commission that would be responsible for setting legislative district boundaries in order to ensure that appropriate representation is the sole driving force behind the creation of districts. This is one part of my comprehensive plan for political reform (see below).

3. Establish a day on which all states hold their primary elections – a national primary day.

No

I support moving up the date of Pennsylvania's primary and ensuring that early primaries represent a diverse cross-section of the nation's voters – which is not currently the case. A national primary day could make it hard to learn enough about candidates and might limit the ability of candidates with less funding to make their message heard.

4. Require that enough voting machines be supplied for all voting precincts so that voters do not suffer time duress.

Yes

5. Ban requirement of picture or registration identification of the voter.

Neither yes nor no:

Federal law requires first-time voters to show identification. I vetoed a bill that would have

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disenfranchised Pennsylvanians by requiring all voters to show government identification.

6. Ban media predictions of election outcomes before polls are closed.

Yes

Other comments or ideas on these topics:

I am an advocate of comprehensive reform that gives Pennsylvanians confidence in their government. Specifically, I have called on the Legislature to enable four key reforms of our political system:

- End entrenched incumbency. It is essential to reform the process for drawing state legislative district boundaries so that redistricting is conducted by a nonpartisan independent commission that can ensure that appropriate representation is the sole driving force behind the creation of legislative districts. We must also end permanent incumbency by introducing term limits for legislators.

- Right-size the Legislature. Pennsylvania should right-size its Legislature in order to reduce costs and increase the General Assembly's productivity. The average size of the State House or Assembly in the five states with a larger population than Pennsylvania is 124, compared to 203 in the Commonwealth.

- Lobbying disclosure. Pennsylvania is the only state without a lobbying disclosure law. I took action by signing an Executive Order requiring that those who lobby the Executive Branch register and report their lobbying expenditures, and the General Assembly needs to follow suit by passing meaningful lobbyist disclosure that requires anyone who lobbies to register and complete itemized expenditure reports.

- Campaign finance reform. Pennsylvania should enact limits on how much can be donated to campaigns, using the federal limits as a model.

Lynn Swan, Republican Candidate for governor

No response

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5th Congressional District Candidates:

Don Hilliard, Democratic candidate

Question # 1: Yes, If you can go to a fast food place and get a receipt for the food you ordered. The technology is there and should be used to make sure that EVERY vote is counted.

Question # 2 : Yes. I am in favor of these types of commissions rather than letting state legislatures make these decisions based on politics.

Question # 3: Yes. I would like to see this but I don't believe that it is possible, too many turf and ego issues to overcome. Regional primaries would have a better chance of success.

Question # 4: Yes. I don't believe that voters should be troubled for doing their civic duty.

Question # 5: Yes. It could cause problems for the voter and can cause voter fraud if misused to try and suppress voting.

Question # 6: Yes. During Presidential years it will need to be based on time zone considerations. Voters in Western states have been known not to vote because elections have been called in the Eastern states

We need to make it easier, not harder for people to vote. Electronic voting may be better, that has yet to be decided by the voters, but whatever system is used it must have the trust and confidence of the public in order for it to work..

John Peterson, Republican, Incumbent Congressman, no response

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State Senate, 34th District candidates

Jon Eich, Democrat, Candidate

Require that voting machines have a paper trail that is verifiable by the individual voter and by election officials at the end of the voting day against machine totals.

Yes. Comment: This is an absolutely essential safeguard of voting rights! 28 other states have adopted this requirement, so should Pennsylvania, however it would be best if HAVA were amended at the federal level to assure a uniform national standard.

Require non-political commissions to create districts that are both competitive and geographically compact, not deliberately safe for one party.

Yes. Comment: Absolutely! This has been part of my platform. Politicians talk about how essential competition is in the private sector. We need competition in our elections and the best way to assure that is by having a nonpartisan, independent Redistricting commission draw district boundaries without knowing party registration and giving priority to keeping municipalities, school districts, and counties in the same legislative district whenever possible.

Establish a day on which all the states hold their primary elections – a national primary day.

Yes- Comment: Other alternatives I would support: regional primaries, moving Pennsylvania's Presidential primary to Super Tuesday.

Require that enough voting machines be supplied for all voting precincts so that voters do not suffer time duress.

Yes.. Comment: No comment necessary, this should be a no-brainer.

Ban requirement of picture or registration identification of the voter.

Yes.- Comment: The only ID that should be required is the voter registration card issued by the county, and then only as necessary. We need to do all we can to encourage voter participation, not make it more difficult for people to vote. Drivers typically carry photo IDs, but people who don't drive are not as likely to have a current photo ID.

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Ban media predictions of election outcomes before polls are closed.

Yes. Comment: Absolutely!

Jake Corman, Republican, Incumbent State Senator:

Require that voting machines have a paper trail that is verifiable by the individual voter and by election officials at the end of the voting day against machine totals.

Yes. Comment: I am a co-sponsor of this legislation.

Require non-political commissions to create districts that are both competitive and geographically compact, not deliberately safe for one party.

Yes.

Establish a day on which all the states hold their primary elections – a national primary day.

Yes. Comment: However, as a state Senator, I have no jurisdiction on when other states set their dates for primaries. This would have to be done at the Federal level.

Require that enough voting machines be supplied for all voting precincts so that voters do not suffer time duress.

Yes. Comment: This is a decision that would have to be made by the local election boards.

Ban requirement of picture or registration identification of the voter.

No. Comment: We must reduce voter fraud in Pennsylvania.

Ban media predictions of election outcomes before polls are closed.

No. Comment: The 1st Amendment to the US Constitution guarantees freedom to the press and speech.

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State House of Representatives, 77th District candidates

Scott Conklin, Democratic candidate

All questions: yes

Barbara Spencer, Republican candidate

Require that voting machines have a paper trail that is verifiable by the individual voter and by election officials at the end of the voting day against machine totals.

Yes, but I'm concerned about the paper trail. Does it provide enough privacy for total anonymity.

Require non-political commissions to create districts that are both competitive and geographically compact, not deliberately safe for one party.

Yes.

Establish a day on which all the states hold their primary elections – a national primary day.

Yes.

Require that enough voting machines be supplied for all voting precincts so that voters do not suffer time duress.

Yes.

Ban requirement of picture or registration identification of the voter.

No. I would want some kind of ID verification, whether just license or picture ID.

Ban media predictions of election outcomes before polls are closed.

No. You cannot ban the freedom of press. But I would support legislation that would prohibit precincts to release outcomes as they're coming in until all polls are closed across the nation.

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State House of Representatives, 171st District candidate (unopposed)

Kerry Benninghoff, Republican candidate

Require that voting machines have a paper trail that is verifiable by the individual voter and by election officials at the end of the voting day against machine totals.

Yes. I have sent a letter to the leadership and to the Secretary of State to do so.

Require non-political commissions to create districts that are both competitive and geographically compact, not deliberately safe for one party.

Yes.

Establish a day on which all the states hold their primary elections – a national primary day.

Yes. I suggest, though, this needs done on the national level.

Require that enough voting machines be supplied for all voting precincts so that voters do not suffer time duress.

Yes.

Ban requirement of picture or registration identification of the voter.

No. Do you want non-residents of a ward, district or state voting?

Ban media predictions of election outcomes before polls are closed.

No.