

# Why Voters in Philadelphia Can Trust the Election Process



Committee of Seventy

Join us in our campaign for better government

Americans don't seem to agree on much these days, but there is one thing that community leaders, elected officials, and candidates for public office in Philadelphia and across the Commonwealth agree on: the sanctity and integrity of our election process is paramount. If Democracy is the lever, voting is the fulcrum. Fixed and stationary, over the years, our voting process has proved itself to be trustworthy and stalwart, able to both withstand and steady the shifting social and political pressures that we resolve through our system of self-governance. Even now, when the strain and tension of civil unrest, the global pandemic, and misinformation push, pull and threaten our nation.

The Committee of Seventy is a non-partisan, non-profit organization led and supported by a group of business and civic leaders to protect and improve the voting process and engage and educate citizens in our local democracy. We have stood watch over elections through every local, state and national election cycle in Philadelphia since 1904. Over the years, the voting machinery, timing, and names on the ballot have changed, but our principles have remained the same: helping ensure safe, accessible and fair elections for all. We assure you that in 2020, Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are ready and prepared for this election. Why are we confident?

## We've invested heavily in secure voting.

In 2019, lawmakers from both major parties recognized the benefits of voting by mail and granted all voters the right to this new way to vote in Pennsylvania. Because of the pandemic, over 3 million Pennsylvania voters will choose to exercise that option this fall. And to maintain the integrity and security of this new voting process, Pennsylvania and our 67 counties invested more than \$100 million in modern technology and new voting equipment over the past year.

## There are dozens of safeguards built into the election process.

Pennsylvania's votes are protected by secure systems and checkpoints. Pre-election training of election officials and poll workers, rigorous contingency planning, equipment testing and re-testing, adherence to a strict chain of custody for our ballots, the use of provisional ballots, a paper ballot trail, vote-counting systems not connected to the internet, cross-state data matching, and post-election audits are just a few of the many embedded protections to maintain election security. Pennsylvania voters are also protected and have the right to vote privately and free from coercion, intimidation, or harassment. Law enforcement agencies are working collaboratively to coordinate efforts to strengthen protections on Election Day.

## We can all trust our local election officials and local media sources for information.

The U.S. Constitution expressly delegates conduct of elections to individual states, and in turn, states rely on county governments to carry out elections. The county election officials who manage voting, the poll workers who put in long hours on Election Day, and the local reporters whose bylines you read and broadcasts you listen to are our neighbors, friends, and the people we greet in the grocery store. They work before, during, and after Election Day to ensure the accurate count of every eligible vote and deliver critical information to voters. We owe them our gratitude and trust.

This is the most extraordinary election in our lifetimes. We all have a job to do, whether as a voter, poll worker, or local official. But the times demand patriotism and patience from all of us. Long lines and safety protocols due to the pandemic and the high level of interest in the election will create delays. Mistakes might happen along the way, but we should not place those mistakes in the mosaic of spurious conspiracies. Keep in mind that Pennsylvania is one of only a few states that cannot begin processing mail-in ballots until November 3, and because mail-in votes have multiple security features built into them, they will take longer to count. Counting every vote is essential, and being thorough and accurate is more important than being fast. We will probably not see final results on election night, but only because officials need to make sure all votes count. Let's settle in for Election Week. When it comes to counting votes, we should value accuracy over speed.

As the birthplace of independence, ours is a city built with courageous optimism and pride by individuals united in their shared Constitutional vision to ensure domestic tranquility, promote the general welfare, and form a more perfect union. Philadelphia, and this nation, were established by citizens who were unafraid to test a bold new experiment in self-governance. On November 3, and in the days after, Philadelphia and Pennsylvania will once again show the world what Democracy looks like. We are ready.

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