



## Public Comment on Resolution No. 120539

June 7, 2012

My name is Luke McKinstry and I am here to comment today on Resolution No. 120539, which proposes that City Council conduct hearings to discuss increasing pay for Election Day poll workers in Philadelphia.

I am a member of the staff at the non-profit Committee of Seventy and it is one of my responsibilities to run the non-partisan Election Day Voter Protection Program which documents Election Day problems and works to improve city elections.

Each Election Day, we hear from our volunteers and city voters of high instances where polling places are not properly staffed because there are a limited number of people willing to work.

Seventy wishes to reiterate its longtime support of increasing pay for poll workers.

As stated in this resolution, pay for poll workers in Philadelphia has not been increased since 1999, and is now below the Federal Minimum Wage.

City Commissioner Chairwoman Stephanie Singer pointed out to this Council in May that Philadelphia is ranked 18 among the nation's 20 largest cities in how much it pays its poll workers.

As many people in this room know, Election Day is a very long day.

And this year, the city's poll workers must enforce Pennsylvania's new voter ID law, which will require them to ask every voter entering the polling place – even neighbors they have known for decades - to show valid photo ID in order to cast a ballot.

But even without the new ID law, being a poll worker is not easy. Election law is complex and subject to change. Some may recall that just weeks before the 2008 general election, a federal judge ruled that poll workers had to allow voters to vote by a “provisional paper ballot” if half of the voting machines in their election district were broken.

This year, poll workers again had a short window to learn the intricacies of the state's voter ID law before the April primary, which was deemed a “soft rollout” but put poll workers in the position of asking for ID from voters – but having to explain the new law to voters who did not have one.



## Committee of Seventy

Clean and effective government. Fair elections. Informed citizens.

The experience of deploying the Voter Protection Program has made clear to the Committee of Seventy that high-quality poll workers are imperative to running clean and successful elections. We are pleased that the City Commissioners are making strides to address this issue.

We welcome this resolution for hearings and we encourage its passage.

Thank you.