**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact:** Patrick Christmas
Policy Director

267-940-4503 (o)

pchristmas@seventy.org

April 24, 2019

**COMMITTEE OF SEVENTY RELEASES PHILADELPHIA RESOLUTION 1
New Platform for a Stronger Local Democracy**

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The Committee of Seventy released today a new platform – Philadelphia Resolution 1 – that highlights five areas where change is needed to build a stronger local democracy in the city.

“There’s been vigorous discussion around how our democracy works over the last several years,” said Seventy CEO David Thornburgh. “Much of our attention goes to Washington D.C., but it’s critical that we remember our local and state governments also deserve close scrutiny. What happens in City Hall impacts every Philadelphian on a daily basis – from schools to public safety to job creation. Establishing a more open, accessible and transparent government is essential if we’re to effectively address the most challenging issues facing the city.”

The five planks of the PR1 platform include:

* **Make elections open, fair and competitive:** Philadelphia needs elections that encourage a robust competition of candidates and ideas, and that ensure all voters are represented. What will it take? Encouraging an open and transparent ward system where neighborhood committee people have a voice. Opening primary elections to the more than 125,000 independent voters across the city. Eliminating ballot position as a key factor in who wins public office. And this is just a start.
* **Curb Councilmanic prerogative:** District City Council members have a critical role to play in representing their constituents on development decisions in their communities. But powerful local prerogative has limited the city’s ability to manage growth according to a strategic plan based on shared values and goals. Council took the right step by creating the Land Bank, trying to move towards a more transparent and deliberate process for bringing vacant properties back into productive use. But now we need it to work.
* **Enable citizens to lead the redistricting process:** In Philadelphia and in Harrisburg, voters should have the power to draw the political boundaries so consequential to their representation. As with state and congressional maps, City Council districts should be drawn by an independent citizens’ commission with clear and meaningful criteria and 21st-century standards of transparency and public engagement.
* **Enact council term limits:** Every legislature needs steady turnover to stay representative and responsive, coupling new members’ energy and ideas with the experience of longer-serving lawmakers. Reasonable term limits—three or four terms allowing 12-16 years of service—would bring Philadelphia in line with other major cities and ensure a healthy degree of competition for these important seats.
* **Ensure a more transparent and accessible City Council:** Allow discussion and debate around Council’s $17-million budget during the regular budgetary process, as happens with other offices and agencies across the rest of City government. Even the legislative process itself can be made more open, with current versions of bills, proposed amendments and member votes posted online in real time, and in a manner where the interested citizen can access and understand.

**Visit** [**www.seventy.org/PR1**](http://www.seventy.org/PR1) **to see the full platform.**

“Philadelphia has made serious progress in bolstering its public integrity laws in recent years,” stated Thornburgh. “In fact, City Council’s creation last decade of campaign contribution limits, pay-to-play rules around city contracts, and an independent Board of Ethics were major advancements for a city with a notorious political history. It’s time we discuss and debate another leap forward in cultivating a more open, competitive and representative local democracy. This platform is a place to start.”

Seventy welcomes feedback on PR1 from elected officials, candidates for public office, party leaders and the general public. Email thoughts, questions or concerns to bettergov@seventy.org.

# # #

The Committee of Seventy is an independent nonprofit advocate for better politics and better government in Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. For more information, see [www.seventy.org](http://www.seventy.org/).