

February 14, 2022

Luzerne County Board of Elections
20 N Pennsylvania Avenue
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Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701

The Luzerne County Pro-Voter Agenda
A guide for ensuring the freedom to vote

When it comes to our elections, Luzerne County voters want a transparent process we can trust, free from needless barriers. No matter who we are or how we vote, every eligible voter in Luzerne County must have the freedom to vote and make the promise of our democracy real for us all.

To uphold an inclusive democracy that welcomes every voter's chance to participate, pro-voter policies are needed that ensure integrity, equity, and transparency in our elections. The ability to meaningfully participate in our democracy is a civil rights issue. And the freedom to vote must be safeguarded, with no exceptions.

There are strong and ready solutions to many of our most significant voting problems. Luzerne County has the opportunity to be a consistent leader in how elections are run in Northeastern Pennsylvania and the Commonwealth. To do this, officials must commit to implementing consistent policies and procedures for each and every election designed to minimize voter confusion, maximize voter access, and engender voter trust.

Therefore, we call on elections officials to adopt the following common sense pro-voter policies, which protect and strengthen the freedom to vote for Luzerne County voters by making sure that attempts to create barriers to voting are stopped in their tracks:

Luzerne County Board of Elections and County Council must adopt a Pro-Voter Agenda that includes:

1. ***Accessible ballot drop boxes*** - including purchasing and equitably distributing ballot drop boxes in outdoor locations with 24-hour access. Drop boxes provide safe, convenient, and secure return of mail ballots. Access to these drop boxes should be equitable, and meet the needs of rural voters, Black and Brown voters, voters with disabilities, voters whose primary language is not English, and other historically disenfranchised communities.
2. ***Increased location and number of ballot drop boxes*** - including multiple locations that serve the various geographies of Luzerne County. These drop boxes must be located in every legislative district. Such a policy would ensure that every Luzerne County voter has access to the ballot no matter their work schedule, transportation

needs, or family responsibilities. Furthermore, this encourages maximum participation from our rural communities.

3. **Expanded early voting sites** - permanently creating and using multiple early voting sites with hours that include evenings and weekends. Voter registration should also be offered at these sites. Early voting sites help reduce the levels of Election Day administration. The location of these sites should be accessible to rural voters, Black and Brown voters, voters with disabilities, limited English proficiency voters, and other historically disenfranchised communities.
4. **Fully-staffed polling places** - with trained election workers, finalized at least two (2) weeks prior to each and every election, so that no voter needs to wait in a long line to cast a ballot.
5. **Fully-trained election staff** - poll workers, judges of elections, and any additional staff at polling locations or at the bureau of elections require adequate training from the county elections department to assist voters. This includes expanded and continued training that is current with PA Department of State policy and state election law.
6. **Election information mailed to all voters** - which includes the locations of ballot drop boxes, early voting sites, and polling places. This information should be sent to voters each and every election no less than one month prior to Election Day.
7. **The freedom to vote - in the language voters speak** - Election Officials must make voting materials available in multiple languages, including critical information about polling places and early voting sites. [U.S. census data](#) (2015-2019) shows that 12.1% of people age 5+ in Luzerne County speak a language other than English at home. Thus, election officials must expand language accommodations to meet the needs of this growing electorate.
8. **The freedom to vote - with confidence and pride** - voters in Northeastern PA take pride in the peaceful and community congeniality of our elections. Officials must ensure that every voter is able to exercise their right to vote free from harassment and intimidation, as required by our laws.
9. **Funding that protects the freedom to vote** - continue to advocate for increased resources from state and county officials to fund elections and meet the needs of voters as outlined above. Additionally, explore more innovative streams of revenue from vetted and trusted non-governmental sources (i.e. foundations, third-party organizations, etc.).

By offering voters accessible options to vote, consistent information, transparent decision making, and well- resourced election administration, the Pro-Voter Agenda will enshrine proactive policies that deliver the promise of American democracy to all residents of our county. Ultimately, elections officials work for the voters. Elections administered without these solutions

will result in a lack of continuity between elections, create barriers for residents of our county, and fail to serve Luzerne County voters.

The Pro-Voter Agenda helps give Luzerne County voters an equal voice in the decisions that shape our future and ensures that our elections are fair, free, and accessible for years to come. The Luzerne County Elections Board must listen to their community and implement the Pro-Voter Agenda into their current and future election plans.

The undersigned,

Action Together NEPA

All Voting Is Local PA

Freedom Fighters

In This Together NEPA

UNA

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Wyoming Valley

We Can't Wait PA Statewide Coalition

Wilkes-Barre NAACP