



July 26, 2023

The Honorable Kim Ward
President Pro Tempore
Senate of Pennsylvania
Room 292 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear President Pro Tempore Ward:

As Secretary of the Commonwealth, it is my priority to lead a Department of State that ensures we continue to have safe, secure, orderly, and free elections in Pennsylvania.

I noted your recent comments in support of moving the 2024 Presidential Primary earlier in the calendar from its current date of April 23, 2024, and write to express my position on the matter for your consideration.

As you know, Governor Shapiro has also publicly stated his support for moving the 2024 General Primary – which currently falls on the first full day of Passover, a major Jewish holiday, to ensure that all eligible voters have every opportunity to exercise their right to vote and to serve their community as election officers and poll workers on that day. I know the Governor hopes to work with the General Assembly to make this date change a reality.

While I certainly support making this change, as a longtime election administrator, I strongly urge that any legislation moving the date of the primary be passed by the General Assembly as soon as possible. Given that you have not scheduled the Senate to return to session until September 18, meaning any legislative action on this topic is at minimum two months away, I am deeply concerned we will not give county election officials the time they need to adjust thousands of polling locations to accommodate a new, earlier Primary date.

Typically, county election boards reserve polling locations and poll workers a year or more in advance of an election to avoid conflicts with other events and to have ample time to inform voters of where they will cast their votes. There are more than 9,000 polling locations that need to be secured across the Commonwealth for the Primary election. To provide some context on what that undertaking is like for counties, election administrators in Westmoreland County need to secure 307 polling places and Montgomery County needs to secure 301. County election officials will have to confirm the availability of each of those polling places and their poll

workers and make alternative arrangements if necessary. Additionally, school districts that close their schools to students on election days will have to adjust their academic calendar.

As of the date of this letter, we are just under nine months away from the Primary. With each passing day, it grows more challenging for county election officials to identify and reserve alternative polling locations where conflicts are identified for the current locations. The legislation that has been introduced in the State Senate would move the Primary date five weeks earlier in the year, increasing the pressure on county election administrators even further. Giving counties adequate time to coordinate the people, facilities, and supplies that are necessary to administer an election is integral to a well-run 2024 Primary.

Again, I applaud and share your desire to move the 2024 Presidential Primary and look forward to engaging with you to discuss these logistical considerations in greater depth.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Al Schmidt
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Cc:

The Honorable Joe Pittman, Republican Leader, Senate of Pennsylvania
The Honorable Jay Costa, Democratic Leader, Senate of Pennsylvania
The Honorable Joanna McClinton, Speaker, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Matt Bradford, Democratic Leader, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Bryan Cutler, Republican Leader, Pennsylvania House of Representatives