

Pennsylvania's Recent Election Code Amendments Concern More Than COVID-19 Response

Articles, COVID 19: Answers to Business Challenges April 11, 2020

Many Pennsylvanians already know that the Commonwealth's primary election has been moved from April 28 to June 2 due to the COVID-19 public health crisis. Here are some of the other recently enacted amendments to the PA Election Code, most of which constitute voting reforms unrelated to the current pandemic.

- All legal voters can now vote by mail. May 26, 2020 is the current deadline to apply for a mail-in ballot.
- The straight-party ticket voting option has been eliminated from ballots.
- County boards of election may consolidate polling places so long as the reduction does not result in more than a 60% reduction of polling places in the county.
- The pre-canvassing of absentee and mailed-in ballots is permitted to begin on the morning of election day. The prior tabulation procedure was to wait for polls to close. Disclosure of the results prior to the close of the polls is still prohibited.
- County boards of election will provide at least 48 hours' notice of the pre-canvass meeting. Candidates and political parties are permitted to have one authorized representative present while the ballots are counted.
- County board of elections have until the third day following the election to begin canvassing the absentee and mail-in ballots that were not included in the pre-canvass meeting.
- While county boards of election are still required to publicize election results, they are no longer required to do so by the end of the second day after the election.
- The existing criminal penalties for violations related to absentee and mail-in voting have been lowered from first degree misdemeanors to third degree misdemeanors that are now punishable by fines of up to \$2,500 (instead of \$10,000) or imprisonment for up to two years (instead of five).

The full text of Senate Bill 422 can be found [here](#). For additional information contact Mark Hamilton.