

SHAPIRO FOR GOVERNOR

Josh Shapiro's Plan to Defend Democracy, Ensure Access to the Ballot Box, & Improve Elections

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Over the past two years, American democracy has been threatened like never before. Dangerous lies about the 2020 election results, conspiracy theories, frivolous litigation and witch hunts – amplified by a former president – led to the deadly insurrection at the United States Capitol on January 6th and have served as the inspiration for laws aimed at restricting the right to vote and undermining democracy in state capitals across the country.

Throughout the 2020 election, Attorney General Josh Shapiro stood up to those lies and went to court dozens of times to defend Pennsylvanians' right to vote and ensure every legal vote was counted. As Attorney General, Josh [has prosecuted](#) voter fraud and voter intimidation, and he understands the need to have strong protections at the ballot box. He continues to defend Pennsylvania's election more than a year after votes were cast and two legal audits confirmed the results as Pennsylvania Republicans try to bring a sham "audit" to the Commonwealth. The attacks on American democracy have not stopped, and show no sign of slowing down anytime soon. As Governor, Josh will continue to defend the constitution and the people of Pennsylvania as they exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Josh knows that the stability of our democracy is the foundation for all the work we must do to improve Pennsylvanians' lives — from creating jobs to educating our kids. The next Governor will play a critical role defending Pennsylvania's democracy. Heading in 2022, Pennsylvania's Legislature is already considering [30 bills](#) restricting access to voting, according to the Brennan Center. As Governor, Josh will protect and strengthen our democracy, secure and expand the right to vote for every citizen, improve the efficiency and transparency of our elections, and ensure every legal ballot is counted in Pennsylvania. Josh's plan calls for:

Defending Democracy

- **Veto Any Effort to Restrict Mail-in Voting.** Josh believes it is critical to make voting accessible to all eligible Pennsylvania voters. Act 77, a bipartisan piece of legislation passed in 2019, made significant changes to Pennsylvania's voting laws, including permitting no-excuse mail-in ballots – the process by which an individual can request and mail their ballot without physically going to the polls. Mail-in ballots in Pennsylvania have made voting easier, more efficient, and safe. In 2020, the use of mail-in ballots

helped lead to the [highest voter turnout](#) in the last six decades. As Governor, Josh will veto any bill that eliminates or restricts no-excuse mail-in voting.

- **Appoint a Chief Election Official Who Will Run Elections Fairly and Uphold Democracy.** The 2020 election has taught us that election security and electoral integrity is of the utmost importance. Across the country, unpatriotic extremists are [taking over](#) election administration, threatening to further undermine our democratic institutions. We need in place systems and processes to ensure that every legal and eligible voter who wants to vote can do so without interference, that the process to vote is secure and uncomplicated, and that every vote is counted in a fair and efficient manner – and the right leaders to run elections fairly and protect our democracy. That’s why, as Governor, Josh will appoint a skilled and experienced Secretary of State – the chief official in charge of election administration across the Commonwealth – who will ensure that our elections are conducted securely and fairly. Furthermore, Josh has prosecuted attempts to intimidate Spanish-speaking voters, and he will direct his Secretary of State to make more resources available in different languages so that every eligible voter can make their voices heard.
- **Expand Legitimate County Election Audits.** Josh understands that the success of our democracy is largely dependent on the trust that people have in our institutions – and he’s fought back against illegitimate efforts to seize Pennsylvanians’ private information for partisan purposes. As Governor, Josh will help ensure the stability of our democracy by making state funds available so every county can conduct a post election analysis through a [risk limiting audit](#) (RLA). Currently, counties are [required](#) by law to audit a random sample of only 2% of ballots cast, or 2,000 ballots, whichever is fewer. Starting in the 2020 election, the Commonwealth began an additional pilot program to conduct a second audit through RLAs. In that first year, 63 of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties voluntarily conducted RLAs, which are considered the “[gold standard](#)” of post election audits that provide “[statistical confidence](#)” in election results by incrementally reviewing ballots based on election margins. In Pennsylvania, the results from both the legally required audit and the pilot RLA confirmed the accuracy of the 2020 election results. RLAs shouldn’t just be a pilot, it should be standard practice. As Governor, Josh will provide funds in his first budget so that in addition to the legally required audit, every county also has the resources and preparedness necessary to conduct a risk limiting audit across the Commonwealth.
- **Extend Prohibition on Firearms at Polling Places.** During the 2020 election, law enforcement leaders dealt with increased threats and security concerns around voting locations, and on January 6th, we saw armed insurrectionists breach our nation’s Capitol. We must ensure our election precincts remain places of patriotism and enfranchisement – where voters and poll workers alike feel welcomed and safe. Current state law prohibits guns in some polling places but not others, including schools and courthouses. Given the fact that law enforcement is required to remain at least 100 feet from the polling place, this creates a potentially dangerous scenario where local police

may be unable to respond immediately to a violent incident. Josh will sign legislation similar to what has been [previously introduced](#) by state House Democrats to make Pennsylvania's law uniform and extend the prohibition on firearms to include all polling places, similar to laws on the books in states like Texas, Georgia, and Florida.

Ensuring Access to the Ballot Box

- **Establish Automatic Voter Registration (AVR).** Currently, the Commonwealth requires that individuals opt-in to register to vote, even after utilizing services at state agencies like the DMV, resulting in hundreds of thousands fewer registered voters. Under Josh's proposed AVR plan, an eligible voter 18 or older who applies for a driver's license or state identification through the DMV would automatically be registered to vote, saving them from having to fill out a separate voter registration application, similar to the process outlined in former Representative Ed Gainey's [HB 183](#). The voter would then be sent a letter informing them they were registered to vote, giving them the chance to confirm their party affiliation, and opt-out of voter registration if they so choose. Based on [independent studies](#) and 2020 data from the Pennsylvania [DMV](#) and the [Department of State](#), implementing AVR would register hundreds of thousands more Pennsylvanians to vote. [Research](#) has also shown that AVR is an effective way to streamline a state's voter registration process while improving the accuracy and security of the electoral system. Josh believes that for legally eligible voters, it should be easier to vote, not harder. He also believes that the Commonwealth can simultaneously improve election security while also making it easier for eligible voters to vote. That's why, as Governor, Josh will sign a bill to institute AVR in the Commonwealth – a process that has been adopted by 22 [states and the District of Columbia](#).
- **Implement Same Day Voter Registration Through Election Day.** Currently, unregistered voters in Pennsylvania must register to vote 15 days before Election Day. To make voting as accessible as possible, Josh believes voters should be able to both register to vote and cast a ballot on the same day during his proposed early voting period or on Election Day. Same day registration allows voters who are not registered to go to a polling location in their county, register to vote, and cast a ballot – all in one visit. In order to ensure only legally eligible people are voting, under Josh's plan, a prospective voter who is not registered but wants to make their voice heard will be given a provisional ballot. The ballot will not be counted until the individual's identification is verified in the registration process. To ensure that counties can safely implement this plan, Josh will sign legislation to provide resources for counties to open early voting locations with proper staffing. Currently, 18 states and Washington D.C. offer same day and/or [election day voter registration](#), and Josh would sign legislation to make same day voter registration available in Pennsylvania.
- **Expand Pre-Registration Opportunities for Young Voters.** Presently in Pennsylvania, an individual can only register to vote if they will be 18 years of age by the next immediate election. Josh understands that young people are Pennsylvania's future

leaders and involving high school students in the democratic process earlier by allowing them to pre-register to vote will lead to higher levels of civic engagement. In Florida, where they implemented a pre-registration program for 16 and 17 year olds, turnout among young voters who pre-registered increased roughly [4.7 percent](#). As Governor, Josh will sign legislation allowing young voters easier access and opportunity to become eligible to participate in elections as soon as they turn 18. Under Josh's plan, a 16 or 17 year old in high school will have the opportunity to fill out a pre-registration form to vote with the Department of State. This form will then be processed by the Department of State, where it will remain in a "pending status" until the individual turns 18, at which point they will be added to the state voter registration system. Josh's Department of State will also work closely with parents and local high schools to distribute the pre-registration forms electronically and via paper form and encourage Pennsylvanians to participate in our democratic process.

- **Establish Early In-Person Voting.** [Almost](#) half of the states around the country give voters some form of early, in-person voting opportunity so that every legally eligible voter has plenty of time to exercise their fundamental right to vote as an American. Pennsylvania is not one of those states. States like Florida allow early in-person voting to start 10 days before Election Day and Texas starts early in-person voting 17 days before Election Day. Josh understands that limiting in-person voting to a Tuesday in November, between strict hours, forces millions of Pennsylvanians throughout the Commonwealth to choose between participating in the election of their local, state, and federal leaders, or work, school, and child care. As Governor, Josh will sign legislation to establish early in-person voting for a dedicated period of time before election day, a measure that enjoys bipartisan support across the Commonwealth. He will also work with the Legislature and make available the resources necessary for counties across the Commonwealth to implement early in-person voting.

Improving Elections

- **Allow Pre-Canvassing and Provide Necessary Resources to Counties.** Despite a successful 2020 election that yielded the highest voter turnout in six decades, the volume of participation combined with the COVID-19 pandemic exposed some weaknesses in our election laws. County Commissioners and other local officials faced the brunt of these issues. Following the 2020 election, the inability to pre-canvass mail-in ballots led to unacceptable delays in reporting election results. In January of 2021, a bipartisan group of local leaders across the Commonwealth shared their [concerns and suggestions](#) to improve the election process, however, most of these requests have not been addressed. As a former County Commissioner, Josh Shapiro understands the unique challenges counties face when overseeing elections and the importance of working closely with both the legislature and executive offices to ensure election integrity. As Governor, Josh will sign legislation, enabling and funding the pre-processing and pre-canvassing of mail-in ballots, following the example of 17 states – including

Ohio, North Carolina, and Arizona – and recommendations of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania and legislative leaders from both parties.

- **Create a Centralized Site to Report All Election Results.** Every election day, after casting their ballots and patiently waiting for the polls to close, Pennsylvanians await the results to see who will serve them at all levels of government. Unfortunately, many results of local and municipal elections that have the most impact on a person's everyday life are typically difficult to find. Rather than having a single place for Pennsylvanians to track the races for their local mayors, commissioners, supervisors, and others, the Commonwealth relies on county websites and news sites that may be delayed and hard to find. Currently, on the Pennsylvania Department of State's website, only statewide race results are available on election night. This system is complicated and fails to provide transparency of our elections. Josh understands that it is crucial for the Commonwealth to update its election reporting systems to the 21st century. At the very least, Pennsylvanians should be able to go on one single website to track all election races on election night. As Governor, Josh will direct his Secretary of State to promptly create a single, easy to use website to report every election result in the Commonwealth in one place so that reporting is accurate, timely, and easy to access.