Secure Democracy
FOUNDATION

Pennsylvania on Offense
The Path Forward to Strengthen Our Elections

Pennsylvania's elections follow a rigorous system of checks and balances that ensures every election is free, fair, and secure. In recent years, however, we've seen bad actors exploit weaknesses in state law — fueling misinformation, legal battles, and spurious attempts to overturn the will of the voters.

This factsheet outlines three commonsense policy solutions that Pennsylvania lawmakers and election administrators can consider to close those gaps — before and after Election Day. For a deeper dive into the national context and proven solutions, see our full report, "States on Offense: The Path Forward to Strengthen Our Elections." For more information, please contact us.

This resource is strictly nonpartisan and for educational use only. It is 501(c)(3) compliant and is not intended for any partisan, political, or electioneering activities.

Pennsylvania Elections By the Numbers

Registered Voters: 8,874,985[1]
Voter Turnout (Registered Voters %): 2022 [67 %] 2024 [84 %][2]
Voting Methods (Election Day/Mail %): 2022: 76%/23%; 2024: 71%/27%[3]
Recent Attempts to Exploit Election Vulnerabilities:
- Lawsuit Seeks to Throw Out 2.5 Million Mail Ballots in the 2020 Election
- Three Counties Fail to Certify Primary Until Courts Intervene

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[1] "Voter registration statistics by county" (Information as of Sept. 1, 2025), Pa. Dept. of State website. Accessed at https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dos/resources/voting-and-elections-resources/voting-and-election-statistics on Sept. 3, 2025.
[2] 2022 EAVS Report, p. 6, Appendix A: Descriptive Tables, Overview Table 1: 2022 EAVS at a Glance; 2024 EAVS Report, p. 6, Appendix A: Descriptive Tables, Executive Summary Table 1: 2024 EAVS at a Glance.
[3] *Id*. Pennsylvania allows voters to cast mail-in ballots in person prior to Election Day, but does not track those voters separately from other mail-in ballot users.

Three Fixes for Stronger Pennsylvania Elections

1	**Speed up election results reporting** by allowing election officials to pre-process mail-in ballots before Election Day and providing in-person early voting opportunities.
2	**Reduce voter confusion** by establishing clear standards for correcting mistakes on ballots and offering secure options for ballot return.
3	**Protect the will of the voters** by providing clear standards and deadlines for post-election challenges.

Fix #1: Speed Up Election Results Reporting
Allowing election officials to process mail-in ballots before Election Day and providing in-person early voting opportunities would speed up results reporting and reduce the spread of misinformation.

Pennsylvania is one of a few states that does not allow election officials to pre-process mail-in ballots, even though voters return them well before Election Day. Limiting all of this work to Election Day itself can cause delays and fuel speculation about election issues, especially in close races. Additionally, while voters can cast mail-in ballots in person before Election Day, this process has led to long lines, confusion, and litigation, as seen in Bucks County in 2024. Lawmakers can enact a more efficient process modeled after successful ones in many other states to meet the growing demand for casting ballots early and in person.

Fix #2: Provide Clear Rules for Fixing and Returning Ballots
Lawmakers can reduce confusion by providing uniform standards for correcting ("curing") small mistakes on their mail-in ballots and for returning ballots through secure, reliable methods.

Currently, Pennsylvania law does not specify how eligible voters may correct ("cure") minor errors with their absentee ballots. Likewise, the state does not clarify the availability of secure alternative ballot return options, which is of increasing importance amid growing concerns about the reliability of mail service. This lack of clarity has led to repeated lawsuits before and after elections, creating confusion and threatening to discard valid votes through no fault of the voter.

Fix #3: Set Clear Standards for Post-Election Challenges

Lawmakers can create explicit grounds and minimum evidentiary standards for post-election challenges and set clear deadlines for resolution.

Nearly every federal election in Pennsylvania has been flooded by post-election challenges. While almost all of them are rejected by the courts, they have succeeded in delaying certification and reducing voter confidence in elections. Without clear deadlines for resolution, the state also risks missing federal deadlines for naming its presidential electors or certifying newly elected officials.