

Election and Voting Reform Survey

- 1) *Would you support allowing voters the option to request and submit absentee ballots before Election Day without offering a reason or excuse?*

<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>UNCERTAIN</u>
1189	475	112
67%	27%	6%
Total responses: 1776		

Background: Currently in Pennsylvania, voters may only use **absentee ballots** (ballots requested before the election and submitted by mail or in person) for certain reasons (or excuses), including, for example: illness or disability, business or vacation outside the municipality, or the observation of a religious holiday. **No-excuse absentee ballots** or **optional vote by mail**, however, can be requested for any reason and by any eligible voter. Twenty states (including Pennsylvania) require a reason or excuse to use an absentee ballot, while 27 states and the District of Columbia allow no-excuse absentee ballots.

- 2) *Would you support allowing voters the option to vote for a certain period before Election Day at a select number of early voting locations?*

<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>UNCERTAIN</u>
1369	292	111
77%	16%	6%
Total responses: 1772		

Background: **Early voting** allows voters to cast a ballot in person for a specified period before Election Day. This time period varies in duration from state to state, with an average of approximately three weeks; the number of early voting locations varies by county. Two thirds of states have some form of early voting, and in more than 20, this means voters have the opportunity to vote on a weekend.

- 3) *Would you support amending the PA Constitution to create an independent Citizen's Redistricting Commission responsible for drawing Congressional and state legislative districts?*

<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>UNCERTAIN</u>
1035	332	384
59%	19%	22%
Total responses: 1751		

Background: The Pennsylvania General Assembly currently has significant control over how Congressional and state legislative districts are drawn after each U.S. Census. This process is required every 10 years to ensure districts remain equal in population. Consequently, boundaries can change drastically when one party wrests control of the redistricting process from the other. The process also gives party leaders considerable power to draw districts as they see fit.

An independent **Citizen's Redistricting Commission** would have strict rules about the political connections of participating members, none of whom could be politicians, their employees or family members. Clear guidelines (e.g. compactness, minimal number of divided counties and municipalities) for the drawing of boundaries would also be installed to reduce the risk of political meddling. Arizona and California each have notable models of independent redistricting commissions that Pennsylvania could consider.

Additional information on the current process: Congressional districts in Pennsylvania are drawn through the regular legislative process by the General Assembly; that is, a bill defining new boundaries must pass in each chamber (PA House and Senate) and be signed by the Governor to become law. This has typically resulted in new boundaries favoring the party that controls the General Assembly and governorship.

State legislative (PA House and Senate) districts are determined by a bipartisan **Legislative Reapportionment Commission** comprised of the majority and minority leaders in the General Assembly (i.e., two Democrats and two Republicans). If these four members cannot agree on the fifth member (and chair) of the Commission, the PA Supreme Court appoints this person. This commission determines the new districts. Depending on the partisan leaning of the high court, this fifth member can determine whether the new boundaries favor Democrats or Republicans.

Survey Instructions

Approach a voter to administer the survey only after they have voted and have exited the polling place. If you are speaking with a voter for any reason before they have voted (e.g. answering a question about the voting process), let them know that you have a survey you'd like to give them when they finish voting.

For each voter, provide the introduction in italics at the top of this document. It is acceptable to provide additional background information if they request it. Most background information is gathered from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), a bipartisan source of policy research specifically intended for states. Do not provide your own opinion (or Seventy's) or the current tallies on any of the questions until you've received responses on all questions. ***It is important not to influence responses.***

The Committee of Seventy's Positions

If a voter asks, do not advise them of Seventy's positions until after they've completed the survey. We do not want this information to affect their responses.

- 1) **No-excuse absentee ballots:** Seventy does not have a position on this reform at this time.
- 2) **Early voting:** Seventy does not have a position on this reform at this time.
- 3) **Redistricting reform:** Seventy is a supporter of Fair Districts PA, a statewide coalition that supports redistricting reform; this includes amending the state Constitution to create an independent Citizen's Redistricting Commission. For more information, visit **FairDistrictsPA.org**.