



Committee of Seventy Election Ambassador Survey

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

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
872	533	173
55%	34%	11%

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 (no reason or excuse must be offered).

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?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
926	471	140
60%	31%	9%

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?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
755	396	401
49%	26%	26%

Background: Currently in Pennsylvania, the General Assembly has significant control over how Congressional and state legislative districts are drawn after each U.S. Census; the decennial process is required to ensure each district remains equal in population. Consequently, boundaries can change drastically when one party wrests control of the redistricting process from the other. The process also grants party leaders considerable power to reward or punish rank and file members by manipulating their districts.



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 generally 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 has generally determined whether the new boundaries favor Democrats or Republicans.

4) Would you support allowing independent and third party voters to vote in primary elections?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
958	426	142
63%	28%	9%

Background: Pennsylvania has a **closed primary system**, only allowing registered Democrats and Republicans to vote in spring primary elections – and only for candidates in their party. Independent and third party voters must wait until the general election in the fall to vote for candidates. If Pennsylvania were to have **semi-open primaries**, independent and third party voters could choose a primary (Democratic or Republican) to participate in.

5) Would you support allowing young people aged 16 and 17 the opportunity to preregister to vote? (Voters must still be 18 or older to cast a ballot.)

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
1182	298	70
76%	19%	5%

Background: Young people in Pennsylvania can only register to vote if they will be 18 on or before the day of the next election (and if the residency and citizenship requirements are satisfied). Youth preregistration would allow 16 and 17 year olds to register ahead of time; however, they would not be eligible to vote until they turn 18. More than 20 states allow some form of preregistration, though the specific age requirements differ; none are younger than 16.



High school students working as Election Ambassadors were deployed across the city on April 26, 2016 and provided the instructions below. Seventy appreciates the support of the students and their teachers in administering the survey – and to the many voters who participated on Election Day.

NOTE: Survey results are not drawn from a random and representative sample of Philadelphia area voters. Despite the high number of respondents, only rough generalizations inferred about the opinions of the 1500+ survey participants – not the broader population of voters.

Election Ambassador 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) on any of the questions until you've received responses on all five questions. ***It is important not to influence responses.***

Background on the Committee of Seventy

Seventy is a nonprofit and nonpartisan advocate for better government in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. Founded in 1904 to combat corruption and waste in government, Seventy's mission continues to campaign for government citizens can trust. Today, the organization focuses on a range of issues; however, many are related to elections and voting, ethics and transparency in government, and campaign finance.

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.
- 4) **Opening primaries:** Seventy does not have a position on this reform.
- 5) **Youth Preregistration:** Seventy does not have a position on this reform at this time.