



Legislation Text

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Amending Title 21 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled, "MISCELLANEOUS," by adding a new Chapter 21-3100, entitled "VOTING MACHINE LANGUAGES REQUIREMENT;" all under certain terms and conditions.

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. Legislative Findings:

(1) On February 20, 2019, the City of Philadelphia Board of Elections approved Election Systems and Software, LLC's "Express Vote XL" voting machines for use in Philadelphia elections pursuant to the Pennsylvania Election Code.

(2) Subsequently, the City of Philadelphia Procurement Department entered into Contract 196400 with Election Systems and Software, LLC, to purchase new voting machines for use in the City of Philadelphia elections.

(3) That procurement was to satisfy Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Westerman Wolf's mandate that Pennsylvania counties select new voting systems that provide a voter verifiable paper record and meet 21<sup>st</sup>-Century standards of security, auditability, and accessibility, no later than December 31, 2019, and preferably by the 2019 General Election.

(4) While the Express Vote XL voting machines were selected to meet Governor Wolf's requirements, those voting machines also have the happy capacity to be programable in sixteen languages.

(5) Over 21% of speakers in Philadelphia (308,605) speak a language other than English at home, while nearly 10% of speakers in Philadelphia (138,697) speak English less than "very well." There are at least 71 languages spoken in Philadelphia:

Table 131. Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 2013

Release Date: October 2015

	Number of speakers <sup>1</sup>	Percentage of Number of Speakers	Speak English less than "Very Well" <sup>1</sup>	Percentage of Number of Speakers
<b>.Population 5 year</b>	<b>1,432,316</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>138,697</b>	<b>9.68%</b>
Speak only English	1,123,711	78.45%	(X)	(X)
<b>Speak a language English at home</b>	<b>308,605</b>	<b>21.55%</b>	<b>138,697</b>	<b>9.68%</b>



(7) Currently, lack of facility in English or Spanish is a barrier to effective participation in voting and, therefore, is antithetical to Democracy in Philadelphia.

(8) On June 20, 2019, Philadelphia City Council passed Resolution 190584 urging the Office of the Philadelphia City Commissioners to maximize language access services available through the City's new voting machines.

(9) As a City known for being immigrant-friendly, it behooves the City of Philadelphia to make the voting process as accessible as possible to immigrants living amongst us to allow them to participate in and enrich our Democracy.

(10) Technology has made it possible to enable voters whose command of English is limited to vote in a language in which they are fluent.

(11) In the future, unlimited access to languages other than English will make it possible to greatly broaden participation in elections, and this opportunity should be maximized to enrich our Democracy in Philadelphia.

SECTION 2. Title 21 of The Philadelphia Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

TITLE 21. MISCELLANEOUS.

\* \* \*

*CHAPTER 21-3100. VOTING MACHINE LANGUAGES REQUIREMENT*

*§ 21-3101. Definitions, Usages, and Data.*

(1) *For purposes of this Chapter, the definitions and usages of words shall be the same as the definitions and usages of such words in the most current Pennsylvania Election Code.*

(2) *For purposes of this Chapter, the data used in mathematical calculations shall be sourced from the most current United States Census Bureau American Community Survey data set for "Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over for Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania."*

*§ 21-3102. Voting Machine Languages Requirement.*

(1) *In all Philadelphia elections, voting machines shall be programmed to utilize the maximum capacity for languages that such machines afford, with the selection of languages determined by numerical calculation of percentages starting with the highest language usage for specific language speakers who speak English less than "Very Well" divided by the total number of speakers in the population 5 years and over for Philadelphia County using the data as reported by the most current United States Census Bureau American Community Survey, and extending until the maximum capacity for languages such machines afford is fully*

*utilized.*

(2) *No voting machine shall be used in an election that has not been programmed to maximize capacity for languages that such machines afford in accordance with this Section.*

(3) *Nothing in this Section shall be construed as inconsistent with the most current Pennsylvania Election Code.*

SECTION 3. This Ordinance shall take effect immediately.

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**Explanation:**

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted.  
*Italics* indicate matter added.