

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Philadelphia City Council Committee on Legislative Oversight to hold public hearings examining issues that arose from the primary election mail-in ballot process, and recommendations for necessary procedures to improve voter education and voter processes for the upcoming general election, including potential funding and staffing needs of the Philadelphia City Commissioners Office.

WHEREAS, As of November 5, 2019, there were a documented 1,062,606 voters in Philadelphia county, with 20-25% of them anticipated to vote by mail-in ballot in the June 2020 primary election, due to adjustments in voting procedures caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania state law requires that all votes in an election to be counted no later than 20 days after the election date. The City of Philadelphia is currently in danger of missing this deadline, as delays in counting mail-in ballots have occurred. As of Thursday, June 4, 2020 about half of the City's votes remain uncounted, as officials worked to double check voting books to ensure no voter had voted more than once; and

WHEREAS, These delays were caused by an onslaught of mail-in ballot requests, including 92,000 requests being processed after City poll books had already been printed. The poll books are used to safeguard against voter fraud, marking whom had requested a mail-in ballot, to ensure they are not allowed to vote more than once. Additionally, approximately 13,500 mail-in ballots arrived in Philadelphia two days after the election, and would not have counted without Governor Wolf's deadline extension; and

WHEREAS, It remains in question what voting procedures will be in place for the November 2020 General Election, as many healthcare professionals fear a second wave of the COVID-19 virus. Due to this reality, we must work to ensure that our "new normal" of voting procedures are accurate, secure and transparent; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the Philadelphia City Council Committee on Legislative Oversight to hold public hearings examining issues that arose from the primary election mail-in ballot process, and recommendations for necessary procedures to improve voter education and voter processes for the upcoming general election, including potential funding and staffing needs of the Philadelphia City Commissioners Office.