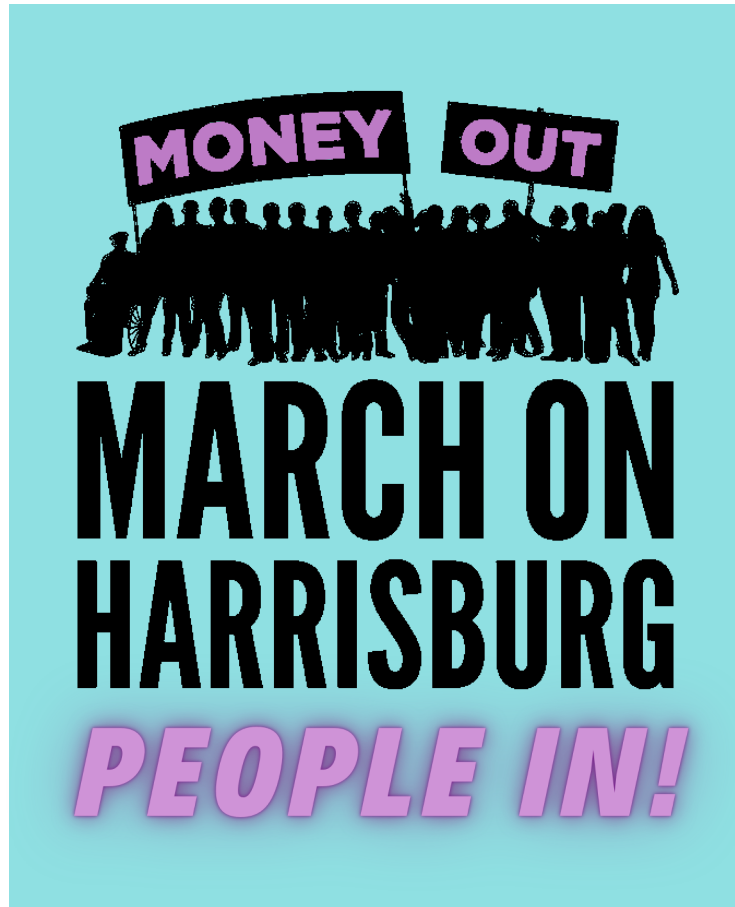


POLICY PLATFORM



INTRODUCTION

While 2020 was a year that the COVID-19 pandemic waged a devastating toll on human life, it was also a year of uprising. Across the United States, the poor and working-class stood up and organized to demand economic relief during an unprecedented public health crisis that caused businesses to shutter their doors and accelerated food and housing insecurity. When the federal government failed to sufficiently intervene, working class activists organized mutual aid projects of survival to try to meet the immediate needs of communities through free meals, community fridges, and PPE distribution. In the spring and summer, after the state-sanctioned murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (preceded and followed by too many other murders this year,) communities again took to the streets to demand an end to police brutality and to defund police departments across the country.

Additionally, there is another kind of movement growing around the globe – the democracy movement, a demand for a government of, by, and for the people. In Belarus, Thailand, and across the United States, people are demanding a government that represents their needs, and for meaningful elections free of corruption and voter suppression.

The white supremacist attack on the US Capitol Building on January 6, 2021 brought to the forefront of our collective conscious a growing authoritarian movement in our country and in Pennsylvania. This self-described ‘democracy movement’ to ‘protect elections’ in the US is the opposite of our movement to end corruption and voter suppression. While the fascists deal in conspiracy theories, lies, and propaganda fueled by big money and spread by elected officials like Donald Trump, the pro-democracy movement in Pennsylvania and around the world deals with reality. While they fight to limit voting and make elections meaningless, we fight to expand voting and make our elections meaningful.

Unlike this white nationalist movement for ‘democracy,’ we are not demanding to ‘fix a broken system,’ but to acknowledge that the system that was designed by white, male, slave-owners is working as it was designed to elevate the voices of the few over the needs of many. This system was designed to ensure that the conquests of that nation to displace and slaughter indigenous people and use enslaved people to grow its wealth, would go unchecked. The story of our country is the ongoing revolution of the working-class movement for the promise of democracy to free slaves, expand voting rights, and take on corruption throughout our history.

We have the promise of the Liberty Bell, upon which is inscribed a verse from Leviticus chapter 25, “Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.” The liberty defined in Leviticus 25 is the cancelation of debts, the freeing of slaves, respect for the environment, and the redistribution of concentrated and monopolized wealth. Yet, across the Commonwealth, liberty is not ringing. One in two children lives in poverty,¹ seniors lose their homes over property taxes while 74% of our large corporations avoid taxes,² community water supplies have been poisoned,³ and our minimum wage remains shamefully lower than the \$24.24 / hour necessary for a safe life of dignity.⁴

We must pursue the promises of liberty for all.

To create a democracy that is representative and responsive to the needs of the people, we need to imagine a system of government that meets the needs of all of its people. We are fighting for a just political system, a just economy, a just society, justice for all. We need to take our democracy where it has never been before. The way to achieve this is through a broad, moral fusion coalition that organizes across traditional lines of division – a movement away from militarism, materialism, racism, and ecological devastation, and toward liberty and justice.

INTRODUCTION

We have been protesting for democracy since before the 2020 or the 2016 presidential elections. In April 2016, a couple of hundred activists that were tired of unfettered corporate influence on politics and voter suppression marched 140 miles from Philadelphia to Washington D.C under the leadership of Democracy Spring. In April 2016, 400 activists were arrested for sitting on the steps of the capitol, demanding Congressional action on money in politics and protesting the Citizens United ruling which established unlimited independent expenditures of corporate wealth as corporate free speech. While sitting in a warehouse jail after the arrests, the Pennsylvanians there banded together to commit to take the fight for democracy and against corruption to the state level. Just a few months later, the core team of MarchOnHarrisburg had formed, and we agreed to take the fight to get money out of politics and expand voting rights to the state level in Pennsylvania through lobbying, marching, and non-violent civil disobedience.

In January 2017, we began lobbying on our first legislative agenda – the gift ban, ending gerrymandering, and ending voter suppression through automatic voter registration. Since then, we have lobbied virtually every legislator in Pennsylvania, marched 265 miles across the state, organized 20 nonviolent direct actions, and continued to expand the scope of our policy priorities. In the fall of 2019, after years of tireless advocacy, we helped pass our first bill into law. Act 77 was the first substantive electoral code rewrite since 1937, and it included vote by mail, which recently allowed millions of Pennsylvanians to vote from the safety of their home without needing a reason.

Now, we detail our 23 point policy platform to take democracy where it has never been before in Pennsylvania. These policies, though not exhaustive, offer a policy pathway to becoming a shining example for democracy, and ensuring that every Pennsylvanian has a dignified and meaningful voice in government regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or wealth.

The promise of democracy is great, and it must be honored. Article 1 Section 2 of the PA Constitution declares that “All power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority and instituted for their peace, safety and happiness.” May we have the courage and wisdom to make these words a reality.

For Love and Democracy,
The MarchOnHarrisburg legislative team, chapter leaders, and staff



WHO WE ARE

MISSION

Make Corruption Illegal and Take our Democracy Where It's Never Been Before

MarchOnHarrisburg works to end corruption and move Pennsylvania from one of the most corrupt states into one of the most representative by passing a wave of democracy bills to end excessive money in politics, and secure and expand the right to a meaningful vote through education and leadership development, grassroots organizing, lobbying, marching, and nonviolent direct action.

STRUCTURE

Decentralized Structure

Leadership is distributed throughout our organization within local chapters, working groups, and the steering committee. Members and teams are autonomous in all matters and actions that are consistent with these Principles.

Democratic Cooperation

We practice democratic collaboration to maximize participation, effectiveness, and empowerment. We take collective responsibility to listen, maintain respect and dignity, strive toward consensus decision making when possible, and default to majority decision making when necessary.

Inclusion

We welcome all who embrace these Principles and work to create an empathetic and inclusive community in which everyone is supported in developing as a leader, including people of color, women, LGBTQ people, poor people, immigrants, and others who are traditionally underrepresented. We strive to overcome racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and all forms of oppression, suppression, and repression in the MarchOnHarrisburg community and our world.

Leadership as Service

We affirm and respect leadership as an act of service and responsibility, and a process of development and empowerment rather than dominance, ego gratification, or profit-seeking.

Volunteerism

MarchOnHarrisburg is a volunteer-driven organization, with support from three staff members.

PRINCIPLES

The Principles of MarchOnHarrisburg are the defining agreements that unite us and provide for the maximum freedom and creativity of all members while ensuring that our efforts work in harmony to advance our common goals.

WE ARE NONPARTISAN

We are nonpartisan and will never endorse a political candidate or a political party. We pursue the goals of a healthy, open, and fair relationship between the government and governed. Our nonpartisan stance is more than a refusal to endorse a candidate; MarchOnHarrisburg believes that the rampant corruption in the government is not and has never been limited to one political party or politician.

WE PRACTICE NONVIOLENCE

We are a nonviolent movement and we maintain nonviolent discipline. Our nonviolent actions are escalations that follow lobbying and demonstrations. The goal of our nonviolent direct action is to force an encounter between we the people and our government. The goal to confront our public servants and insist that they see themselves as human beings obligated to serve the public and that we are human beings who deserve to more fairly participate in making the collective decisions that govern our lives.

WE BELIEVE CORRUPTION IS A 'ROOT' ISSUE

MarchOnHarrisburg does not work for democracy solely for the sake of democracy itself. We believe that systemic corruption and disenfranchisement is the root issue that prevents change in all areas of social justice including systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy, and our distorted white supremacist moral narrative fueled by corrupt propagandists. We believe that government is how we make collective decisions, and until we fix the ways our government makes decisions, we will continue to make poor collective decisions. MarchOnHarrisburg works to illustrate the connections between democracy issues and other areas of life in dire need of justice and compassion.

WE WORK WITHIN COALITIONS

MarchOnHarrisburg participates in coalitions for democracy issues and within coalitions that are fighting for a broader movement for justice and compassion, such as the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call For Moral Revival.

MONEY OUT

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MONEY OUT

“We have the best government that money can buy.”

– Mark Twain

ESTABLISH A PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING SYSTEM OF DEMOCRACY DOLLARS

Since 1974, there have been federal laws to set limits on campaign contributions by individuals, political parties, and PACs, and a pool of public funding for presidential candidates, which helped save Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan’s elections when they were being outspent.^{5,6} 1974 also marked the year the first state – Minnesota – implemented a public campaign financing system on a regional level. Without public funds for their campaigns, candidates for elected office must develop two constituencies: the people of the district that they are elected to represent and their "cash constituents" – those who fund their campaigns, whose interests do not match those of voters.

Democracy Dollars are vouchers that residents receive and can then give to qualified candidates, who then exchange them for public funding to finance their campaign. When elected officials are dependent on their constituents for both the votes to get them elected and the campaign money necessary to run a competitive campaign, they are incentivized and rewarded for serving those constituents. The use of democracy dollars would create an equitable system of publicly funded elections and would increase diversity of candidates and donors by allowing individuals other than the wealthy and ‘well-connected’ to launch a competitive campaign.⁷

A good bill to establish publicly funded elections through Democracy Dollars includes:⁸

- Democracy Dollars vouchers for residents to distribute to the candidates of their choice in elections in which the individual is eligible to vote.
- Participating candidates must agree to contribution limits, spending limits, disclosure requirements, public debates, a ban on PAC money, and penalties for violating the rules.
- Increased public awareness of the program to ensure adequate participation.
- Empowering local governments to implement their own democracy voucher systems for municipal elections.
- Mitigation measures to lessen the impact of spending by political action committees and outside actors.
- A stable source of funding that cannot easily be eliminated by incumbent office holders.

MONEY OUT

PLACE LIMITS ON CONTRIBUTIONS TO CANDIDATES

When one person is able to give a candidate unlimited campaign cash, or threatens to give a candidate's opponent unlimited campaign money, the power and voice of that person is magnified and the power of the majority of the people is diminished. Legislators become grateful and/or fearful of the wishes of their large campaign funders, and put their funders' interests ahead of the People's interests. By limiting the ability of a single person to give a candidate unlimited campaign cash, we can strengthen our democracy by democratizing political power from a small number of large political donors to all of the people of Pennsylvania.

A good bill to place limits on contributions to candidates includes:

- Limitations on campaign contributions to \$500 or less.
- Transparency around dark money.
- A public campaign financing system of Democracy Dollars.
- Reasonable accommodations to streamline the disclosure process: make disclosure easy and accessible and make disclosure desirable for donors

SHINE A LIGHT ON DARK MONEY

Unlimited sums of untraceable money currently flow through our political system. We need to make all political expenditures transparent, and ensure accountability from shareholders when corporate money is spent to influence politics. The ability to stand up and publicly speak about political candidates is every person's right. No one should have the right to do so anonymously, avoiding responsibility for their often false statements, for their lies and smears, or to hide their identity because it would otherwise be illegal for them to spend money to influence our elections.

A good bill to bring money into the light with transparency and accountability includes:⁹

- Requiring disclosure by all groups that spend a substantial amount of money on politics.
- Requiring disclosure of both express advocacy ads and issue ads that mention candidates.
- Requiring disclosure of donors to political spending even if they don't " earmark" their contributions.
- Extending disclosure to organizations that donate to spender organizations.
- Requiring disclosure of the people in charge of opaque spending entities.
- Requiring disclosure before Election Day.
- Reasonable accommodations to streamline the disclosure process: make disclosure easy and accessible and make disclosure desirable for donors

MONEY OUT

ENACT A GIFT BAN

Currently, there are no limits on gifts to public officials in Pennsylvania. General gifts do not need to be reported unless they are over \$250 and travel, lodging, and hospitality gifts do not need to be reported unless they exceed \$650 per giver, per legislator, per year.¹⁰ After two years of our tireless advocacy, MarchOnHarrisburg helped to pass a Gift Ban bill (HB1945) out of the House State Government Committee in 2019, but the legislation was never called to a vote on the floor of the House.¹¹ In the final days of that session, we were assured by Majority Leader Benninghoff that he would have a vote on a Gift Ban bill early in the 2021–22 session. Banning bribery will restore trust between government and governed, and return a voice to the people of Pennsylvania, who are silenced by unlimited gift giving.

A good Gift Ban bill includes:

- Banning anything of a value over \$10 annually (and no cash) to public officials and employees and their close family members from anyone who is not a relative or friend, and requires that every gift of any value (except from family and friends) must be reported.
- Common sense exemptions: light refreshments during a meeting, greeting cards, small commemorative items, plaques, and gifts of under \$100 annually between co-workers are permitted and do not need to be reported.
- Other exceptions allow for trainings, meetings, educational missions, and other events where food and beverages are served and requires that public officials and employees who choose to participate in these events must, within 10 days of participation, post publicly, online, in a form provided by the Ethics Commission, describing the purpose of the public official or employee's participation in the event and the benefit of the public official or employee's participation to the public official or employee's governmental unit.

END PER DIEM PAYMENTS FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

“Per diem” payments of about \$177 per day to public officials are tax-free lump sum payments given to them for each day their duties call them away from home.¹² They are not required to provide receipts or any proof of their actual expenses. If they eat meals paid for by a lobbyist, they get to keep their entire per diem payment. Legislators who want to maximize their income are essentially paid by the public to eat and drink with lobbyists. Many legislators and other public officials do not accept per diem payments and instead provide receipts for their actual expenses and are reimbursed.¹³ When public officials are away from their homes on official duty, they should be compensated for additional food and lodging expenses (with receipts!) but only for their actual expenses and nothing more.

A good bill to END PER DIEM PAYMENTS includes:

- The elimination of per diem payments.

MONEY OUT

PROHIBIT PERSONAL USE OF CAMPAIGN MONEY FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

Legislators are well compensated by the Commonwealth. They are paid a minimum of \$88,610 annually, plus other benefits; the third-highest pay of any state legislature and about 150% of the average Pennsylvanian's income.¹⁴ Pennsylvania politicians have been found to use their campaign accounts to fund items that would otherwise be funded by their own money. Campaign money is spent on meals, vacations, European wine tasting tours, entertainment, and sporting events; items that are not directly related to influencing voters in their district.¹⁵

A good bill to prohibit personal use of campaign money includes:

- Requiring every expenditure to be itemized, including the name and business of the seller and the detailed description of every item or service purchased.
- Requiring every expenditure to be for the purpose of electing the specific candidate, for communicating with constituents of the district during the period that the candidate is an official candidate for office.
- Requiring campaign committees and candidates to provide a statement describing how each expenditure advances the purpose of communicating with constituents of the district within the context of the candidate's reelection campaign.

PROHIBIT SIDE JOBS FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

When a public official holds a side job that can potentially affect their official actions, the conflict of interest that is produced damages the trust that people need to have in their government. It is currently legal for our state legislators to hold side jobs while serving as full-time, well-paid public servants. Many legislators also work for private interests that are affected by decisions our legislators make. For example, while Speaker of the House, Mike Turzai was also a lawyer for a large firm representing Fortune 100 corporations.¹⁶ Preventing state legislators from working other jobs forces our elected officials to prioritize their most important job – representing us!

A good bill to prohibit side jobs for legislators includes:

- Active income is limited to 20% of a legislator's income.
- Passive income sources must be placed into blind trusts, with common sense exceptions.
- Conflicts of interest and paid service on corporate and nonprofit boards are prohibited.
- All active and passive income is fully reported
- Exemptions for income for military service.

MONEY OUT

CLOSE THE REVOLVING DOOR FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

When a former public official accepts a lobbying job or a job with an industry that the public official had an official relationship with, it creates a conflict of interest that damages the trust that people need to have in their government. If former public officials are permitted to accept such jobs, it should be only after a long “cooling off” period. Pennsylvania currently has a one year ‘cooling off’ period, meaning legislators must wait one year before they can become registered lobbyists.¹⁷ Some states have “cooling off” periods as long as six years. We support lengthening the Pennsylvania ‘cooling off’ period, and prohibiting legislators, while in office, from negotiating jobs with firms that lobby or do business with the state. The longer the “cooling off” period, the less likely it is that the public official will be enticed to trade his or her official powers for future gain because the payoff is made more distant and less certain.

A good bill to close the revolving door includes:

- No one convicted of a felony crime involving governance can ever serve as a registered lobbyist.
- Legislators must wait 10 years from the time they leave office before becoming a registered lobbyist.

PEOPLE IN: LET US VOTE

“We know what voter suppression has done. Let me be clear. The politicians and State Houses and Congressional delegations who benefit from racist voter suppression share a policy agenda when they get in office. They have worked as a bloc to attack anti-poverty measures, to attack expanding access to healthcare, to vote against living wages. [All these] policies hurt poor white people most since the total number of poor and [low-income] whites is 66 million in raw numbers and 26 million Black people [in the country]... This is the great and ugly irony of racist voter suppression. The very people who use it to obtain power, once they get that power, they exercise it in ways that hurt mostly white people.”

– Reverend Dr. William Barber, co-chair of the Poor People’s Campaign:
A National Call for Moral Revival, and president of Repairers of the Breach

EMPOWER VOTERS USING BALLOT INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

When the State Legislature or the Governor refuse to pass popular legislation, or if legislative leadership or committee chairs will not even give a bill a vote in the Legislature, the people’s only recourse is to vote out the legislators who are to blame. When legislation is held up by a single legislator such as an unwilling committee chair, then only voters in that legislator’s district can vote them out. When the State Legislature and/or the Governor lack the political will to pass legislation, the voters should be able to organize to put an initiative question on the ballot and, if the voters approve the changes, those changes become the law. A ballot initiative puts the power of legislation directly in the hands of the people – there’s nothing more democratic than that, and just under half the states already have some type of ballot initiative process.

A good voter ballot initiative bill includes:

- A mechanism for the people of Pennsylvania to create laws through initiative and referendum.
- A mechanism for the Legislature to veto approved ballot measures, and then a mechanism for the voters to overturn the Legislature’s veto.

PEOPLE IN: LET US VOTE

MAINTAIN, STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND VOTE BY MAIL

The April 2020 primary and November 2020 general elections were the first time that Pennsylvanians could vote by mail without a reason. When we helped to pass this lifesaving legislation in the fall of 2019, we had no idea how critical this policy would prove to be during the COVID-19 pandemic. And also, its first implementation revealed several shortcomings of the legislation:

- Pre-paid return envelopes are not mandated by Act 77 of 2019 and Act 12 of 2020.¹⁸
- Some of the procedures for vote-by-mail were interpreted or enacted differently in different counties.¹⁹
- Ballots were treated differently by different county election offices.^{ibid}
- Some counties inspected ballot envelopes as they arrived and, if there was a problem with the outside envelope, voters were contacted and permitted to fix their outside envelopes, other counties did not.^{ibid}
- Current law prohibits counties from processing ballots until the morning of election day. This guarantees that there will not be a complete count of all the votes by election night and, in many elections, not for several days. In the worst case, a campaign may deliberately seek to create doubt about the legitimacy of mail-in ballots and, in the case of a presidential election, perhaps to make it impossible to complete the count in time for the selection of electors to the electoral college.^{ibid}
- Signatures are compared only to existing registration signatures and are not challengeable.²⁰

Vote-by-mail should be a trusted, easy, and efficient system for voting and able to produce election results as quickly as voting in person does.

A good bill to strengthen vote by mail includes:

- Counties should send ballots with pre-paid return postage to every registered voter.
- The requirements for vote-by-mail should be clarified, with a focus on accessibility and security, so that all points that were challenged in court are clear.
- Act 77 of 2019 should be amended to allow vote-by-mail ballot envelopes to be examined as they are received and voters should be contacted to “cure” any disqualifying problems with their ballot submission, including the lack of a secrecy envelope.
- Vote-by-mail systems should be updated to state-of-the-art systems, including matching ballot signatures to existing digitized signatures in state records.
- Ballots should be prepared for counting ahead of election day and the counting of ballots should begin the morning of election day.

EXPAND IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING

The passage of Act 77 (indirectly) permits counties to set-up satellite election offices where voters can request ballots, fill them out, and return them – all in the same visit and well ahead of election day. These ballots are treated like vote by mail ballots and are something that voters can do now in any county election office. Counties should be encouraged and funded to open satellite early voting sites to allow people who have difficult schedules to stop by and vote at their convenience and to relieve pressure on polling place workers on election day. Election laws should make it easy to cast a vote, at the polling place, by mail, or at satellite voting locations available to voters in the weeks leading up to election day.

A good bill to encourage in-person early voting includes:

- Additional funding for counties to open and staff satellite voting locations

PEOPLE IN: LET US VOTE

ESTABLISH AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Working class people with busy lives and schedules may be eligible to vote, but are not registered to vote, and registered voters who have moved often forget to update their voter registration until it is too late. Whenever an eligible Pennsylvania voter interacts with the government, they should be automatically registered to vote (unless they choose to opt-out) to decrease the barriers to voting that the poor and working class face. This would ensure that almost everybody is registered to vote, and will produce more accurate voter registration rolls because it would automatically update the voter rolls whenever people move.

Automatic voter registration allows the state government to use information that it already has to electronically register citizens into a voter database. Any time an eligible voter interacts with government services like the Department of Transportation, Department of Human Services and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, that citizen then has the option to register to vote. Unless that citizen chooses not to, their information is electronically and securely sent to the Department of State and to the counties for purposes of registering the voter. Since 2015, 15 states, and Washington DC have adopted AVR.²¹

A good bill to establish Automatic Voter Registration includes:

- Allowing eligible Pennsylvanians to automatically register to vote every time they interact with the state: driver's license, hunting license, fishing license, etc. After automatic registration, they receive a postcard giving them the opportunity to choose a party (or not) or to decline registration altogether. It is an opt-out system rather than the current opt-in system.

ENACT SAME DAY VOTER REGISTRATION

Same day voter registration is another opportunity to ensure that working class people with busy lives and schedules are able to participate in critical elections, even if they forget to register ahead of the election day.

A good bill to enact Same Day Registration includes:

- Allowing citizens with a photo ID to register to vote on election day itself.
- Allowing eligible voters to register at their polling place (by filling out a registration form) on election day and to cast a ballot on election day. Because they are new voters in that polling place they will need to bring proof of identity, as already required by law.
- Requiring the new registrant to provide proof of residency with a valid driver's license or a Dept. of State approved document or by producing another voter in the district who swears (in writing) that the new registrant is a resident of the district. The new registrant casts a regular ballot.
- Requiring identification, but not proof of residency. The new registrant swears to the truthfulness of their address on the registration form. The new registrant is then permitted to cast a provisional ballot. That ballot is only counted after the registration has been approved through (essentially) the existing registration process, a process taking 10 days. The provisional ballots are not opened or counted until the registration process is complete.

PEOPLE IN: LET US VOTE

ALLOW ALL VOTERS TO PARTICIPATE IN PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Our closed primary system requires voters to “join” the Democratic or Republican party in order to vote in the primary election. Closed primaries magnify the power of the most ideological extreme voters and produce legislators who are more ideologically extreme than the district they represent.²² As a result, the ability of members of the General Assembly to work together is diminished when legislators know that if they do compromise, they will be subject to challenge from an ideologically extreme candidate in the next closed “party members only” primary.

Closed primaries produce an electorate that is polarized, apathetic, alienated, and/or disenfranchised.

A good bill that allows all voters to participate in primary elections could include alternatives such as:

- **Top Two Primary:** All candidates in the primary appear on the same ballot. The top two primary vote getters move on to the general election. This is the system in use in California.
- **Open Primary:** Maintain party primaries but anyone, regardless of party, can vote in the party primary of their choice.
- **Alaska System:** All candidates in the primary appear on the same ballot. The top four primary vote getters move on to the general election. The general election is Ranked Choice Voting, the primary is not. This is the system recently passed in Alaska.

EXPAND THE RIGHT TO VOTE TO THE CURRENTLY INCARCERATED

Legislators should not be incentivized to gain political power by taking away the voting rights of any citizen. From the post-slavery South to the current drug “wars”, legislators have a long history of creating crimes that target specific demographic groups and attaching the loss of voting rights to those crimes. By guaranteeing citizens the right to vote, regardless of their current incarceration, we can prevent legislators from abusing their power for their own political gain.

Prisoners should be allowed to register to vote in their home communities and cast a vote by mail while in prison or jail. Prison and jail administrators should formally and effectively assist in both registration and voting.

A good bill that allows all incarcerated people to vote includes:

- Removing from the law any loss of voting rights related to a voter’s current state of incarceration.
- Requiring that prison and jail administrators formally and effectively assist in both registration and voting.

PEOPLE IN: MAKE OUR VOTE COUNT

“They could not take our water away without taking our democracy first.”

– Claire McClinton, Flint Democracy Defense League

INSTITUTE RANKED CHOICE VOTING

In our current system, when there are multiple candidates running for the same office, we vote for one candidate, and whichever candidate gets a plurality of votes wins the election even if that candidate does not get a majority of the votes. In elections where there are more than two candidates for the same office, voters often face the difficult decision of voting for the candidate they really want but who is likely to lose, or voting for one of the two leading candidates. If they vote for the candidate they want, it could actually elect the candidate they truly don't want. In other words, they have to decide whether or not to vote for the “lesser of two evils”. Districts should be represented by candidates who have the support of at least half of the voters, and voters should be free to vote their conscience without fear of being a “spoiler.” In RCV, voters participate in the election by ranking the candidates. If no candidate wins outright by getting more than 50% of the vote, then the candidate who received the fewest votes of all the candidates is eliminated. Votes that had been cast for that eliminated candidate are instantly re-cast for the second favorite candidate of voters who had voted for the eliminated candidate. Because every candidate is seeking to be not only the first choice of each voter, but also the second or third choice, RCV can make candidates more hesitant to engage in divisive and negative campaign tactics.

A good Ranked Choice Voting bill includes:

- Instituting Ranked Choice Voting for legislative, executive, and judicial primary and general elections, including the US Presidential primary and general elections.
- Granting permission to all municipalities to use Ranked Choice Voting for municipal elections.
- A constitutional amendment allowing for gubernatorial elections to be conducted by Ranked Choice Voting.

APPLY THE SAME BALLOT ACCESS REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL CANDIDATES

When candidates run for political office, they need to collect a certain number of signatures in order to officially be on the ballot. The number of signatures that Democratic and Republican candidates need to collect is often far less than the number of signatures required for Green, Libertarian, Independent, and other party's candidates. In special elections, the different requirements are especially onerous. This system creates a competitive disadvantage for non-major parties, and it is an anti-democratic mutual protection scheme for the two major parties.

A good bill to apply the same ballot access requirements for all candidates includes:

- Making the all parties and candidates collect the same number of petition signatures in order to run for office
- Allowing 'third party' candidates to operate by the same rules as major party candidates for special elections

PEOPLE IN: MAKE OUR VOTE COUNT

SIDESTEP THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE IN PENNSYLVANIA AND IN THE USA

Our election for the highest office in the land is determined by a small number of ‘swing states.’ In 2012, literally all general election campaign events (and virtually all campaign expenditures) were concentrated in just 12 states. In 2016, virtually all campaign events (94%) were also in just 12 states²³. The electoral college makes most states irrelevant, leaves most states ignored, and violates the concepts of ‘one person, one vote,’ and ‘the person with the most votes wins the election.’ The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC) is a constitutional way for states to agree to give their electoral votes to the candidate that wins the national popular vote. So far, 15 states plus the District of Columbia (totaling 196 electoral votes) have passed the NPVIC.²⁴ When 270 electoral votes worth of states have passed the NPVIC, it will take effect, and the electoral college will be functionally sidestepped.

A good bill to sidestep the electoral college includes:

- Pennsylvania joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact

SUPPORT AN INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

Our Congressional and State Legislative maps are drawn by elected officials with inherent partisan conflicts of interest. Gerrymandering is when politicians choose their voters through clever partisan mapmaking and pre-determine election results, instead of voters choosing our elected officials through honest elections. The ability to draw congressional and legislative district lines should be in the hands of an independent commission composed of voters who have no extraordinary relationship to politicians or lobbyists and who are chosen by random selection of willing citizens. Every step of the process should be transparent to the public.

A good Independent Redistricting Commission bill includes:

- Full transparency
- Outlawing the use of meta-data, and limiting the commission to only using census data.
- No politicians, lobbyists, or other conflicted individuals allowed on the commission.
- Random selection to determine the commissioners.
- Starting the redistricting process immediately following approval of the constitutional amendment, and then repeating with each new census.

PEOPLE IN: MAKE OUR VOTE COUNT

PREVENT JUDICIAL GERRYMANDERING

The less that judges are involved in politics, the better, because we do not want judges to behave as representatives. Electing judges by district is dangerous because they will be rewarded for representing “their” district instead of doing their impartial duties according to the law.

In July of 2020, the PA House and Senate voted to change the Pennsylvania Constitution in order to elect the Supreme Court, the Superior Court, and the Commonwealth Court by district. If approved again by the legislature, this amendment could go on the ballot for voters to approve or disapprove as soon as May of 2021. Justices who are currently elected at-large would be elected by district. The lines of these districts will be drawn and redrawn by the House and Senate to gain political advantages – the same reasons that legislative districts are gerrymandered.²⁵ Preventing gerrymandering of the state courts means voting against the proposed constitutional amendment. The proper role of our courts is to rule based on existing law, and not to rule based on regional interests. The less judges are required to behave like politicians, the more the public will trust the fairness of the courts.

A good bill to prevent judicial gerrymandering includes:

- Voting against the proposed constitutional amendment and preventing judicial gerrymandering.

END PRISON GERRYMANDERING

When districts are drawn, people in prison (who are denied the right to vote) are included in the district where the prison is, instead of the district where they are from and will return to once released from prison. Prison gerrymandering effectively moves legislative power and representation to areas where prisons are located, and away from the prisoner’s home district.

A good bill to end prison gerrymandering includes:

- When drawing district lines, people who are incarcerated are considered residents of their last known address, and not residents of the correctional facility.

CHANGE THE HOUSE AND SENATE RULES

On the first day of each session, the House and the Senate vote on their internal rules, and our legislature structures itself into an authoritarian structure where a small group of committee chairs and legislative leaders must approve of bills if they are ever going to get voted on. Additionally, party leaders have a great deal of power over which legislators get campaign contributions, how much public money and staff each legislator gets to run their offices, and the party leaders can intimidate other legislators through their power to draw the lines when districts change every 10 years.

PEOPLE IN: MAKE OUR VOTE COUNT

Every voter in a democracy deserves a voice in the legislative process, expressed through the election of representatives, each representative deserves a voice in the legislative process so they can represent their constituents. The House and Senate rules should give every legislator meaningful representation in the General Assembly.

A good bill to change the House and Senate rules includes:

- Guaranteeing that each legislator gets one bill to receive a vote in committee.
- Automatic calendaring of all bills in committee and the House and Senate so every bill gets consideration.
- Designating bills co-sponsored by a majority of the House priority status with direct reporting to the full House.
- Priority bills reported positively out of committee must be debated and voted on the floor of the House.
- Bills with a discharge petition will be discharged from the committee without referral to another committee.
- Committee members will be allotted in proportions that reflect the overall party composition of the House.
- Committee chairman elected by committee members based on their expertise and abilities, not seniority.

HAND-MARKED PAPER BALLOTS

Hand-marked paper ballots are an intuitive and reliable form of voting that is the only form of voting that is not vulnerable to hacking or malfunction, and can be used even in the case of a power outage. Cyber security experts agree that hand-marked paper ballots are the safest form of voting and offer the ‘gold standard’ for an election audit by providing a verifiable paper record that can be recounted in close elections.^{26, 27} For voters with low-technology literacy, hand-marked paper ballots offer the simplest way to participate in our elections.

A good hand-marked paper ballot bill includes:

- Requires that all voting machines involve “the use of an individual, durable, voter-verified paper ballot of the voter’s vote.”²⁸
- The use of optical scanner machines to quickly count the hand-marked paper ballots and tally election results, retain digital images of the paper ballots to facilitate recounts, audits, and adjudication, and that can be used to count absentee and provisional ballots.²⁹

WHAT DO WE LOSE WITHOUT A MEANINGFUL REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY?

PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC

- 38% or 4.7 million people in Pennsylvania were poor or low-income.³⁰
 - This includes 49% of children (1.3 million), 41% of women (2.6 million), 63% of Black people (842 thousand), 73% of Latinx people (707 thousand), and 32% of White people (3 million).
- 692,000 people in Pennsylvania were uninsured (2018)³¹
- Although a living wage in Pennsylvania would be \$24.24 an hour, the minimum wage in the state is \$7.25 in 2019³²
- 22% of census tracts are at-risk for being unable to afford water³³
- About 14,100 people are homeless³⁴
- Of the 42,400 people imprisoned, 58 percent are people of color. Black residents are incarcerated at almost 9 times the rate of White residents.³⁵
- 11,878 deportation cases were pending in Pennsylvania, a 21 percent increase from 2017³⁶
- The poorest 20% of Pennsylvanians pay more than twice the amount of state and local taxes, as a percentage of income, as the top 1%.³⁷

SINCE THE ONSET OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- 1,843,929 people were enrolled in SNAP / food stamps (April 2020)³⁸
- 1,348,000 renters in Pennsylvania were at risk of eviction, a full 40% of households in the state (July 2020)^{ibid}
- 46.3% of Pennsylvania's population, or about 4,520,000 people, have lost income due to the crisis (September 2020)^{ibid}
- 49.7% of Pennsylvania poor and low-income households experienced loss of employment income. (September 2020)^{ibid}
- About 360,000 poor and low-income people in Pennsylvania reported that they sometimes or often do not have enough food to eat. (September 2020)^{ibid}
- In the face of the pandemic's severe economic and public health impacts, about four in ten of the state's population, or about 3,870,000 people, reported symptoms of depression or loss of hope in the previous week. For poor and low-income households, this rate is higher at five in ten. (September 2020)^{ibid}

VOTER PARTICIPATION

- 6.9 million Pennsylvanians voted in the 2020 election, the highest number since at least 1960, 70.93% of voting-age Pennsylvanians participating, an increase from 6.1 million during the 2016 presidential election.³⁹
- Yet, because of voter suppression, a lack of engagement with government, and representatives that do not discuss important issues, in Pennsylvania, there were 1,230,000 low-income eligible voters who did not vote in the 2016 presidential election.⁴⁰

FEDERAL POLICIES

While outside the scope of our work, MarchOnHarrisburg fully supports the following federal pro–democracy reforms:⁴¹

- Passage of H.R 1, For the People Act
- Reinstatement of key protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and updating the formula for preclearance to include historic and contemporary conditions of voter suppression.
- Identification of a federal authority to monitor election turnout, especially for racial and ethnic minorities and poor and low–income voters.
- Federal judicial appointments must take into account nominated judges' histories of decisions on voting rights.
- Designating Election Day a national holiday
- Establish a timely and accessible path to citizenship that permits undocumented immigrants to remain with their families and includes the right to vote
- Overturn Citizen's United

"When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.

Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble. Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.

— John Lewis, Civil Rights Leader, from his last published essay

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