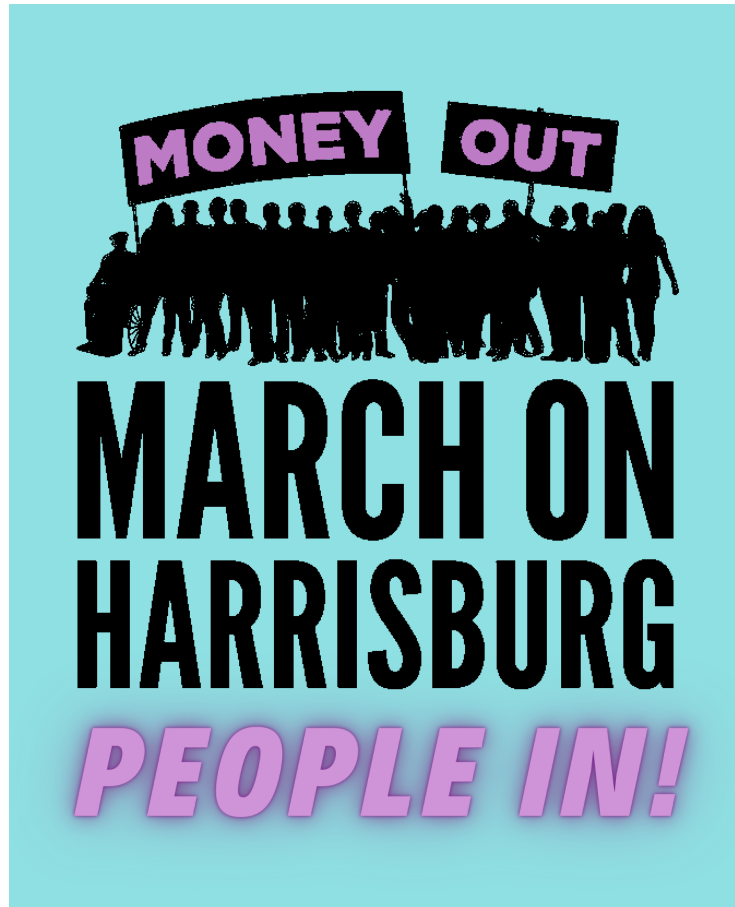
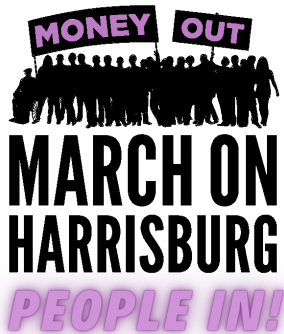


PRIORITIES FOR THE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



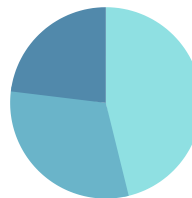


RANKED CHOICE VOTING

PROBLEM: Currently, we vote using a plurality, meaning whichever candidate receives the most votes wins even (in the case of more than two candidates) if that candidate does not get a majority of the votes. If we're allowed to vote for only one candidate, legislators are often elected with the support of just a minority of voters.

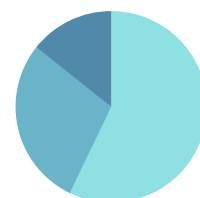
BACKGROUND:

Ranked choice voting is currently used in more than 15 cities, Maine, and countries around the world including Australia and New Zealand.^{1,2} Ranked-choice voting could have big implications for increasingly close presidential elections. In 2000, George W. Bush won Florida by just 537 votes, while Green Party Candidate Ralph Nader received 100,000 votes in the state. If a small share of voters had chosen Al Gore as their 'second choice,' that could have changed the outcome of the election.³



PLURALITY

Even though a majority voted against light blue, light blue wins.



MAJORITY

Light blue receives greater than 50%, and therefore wins.

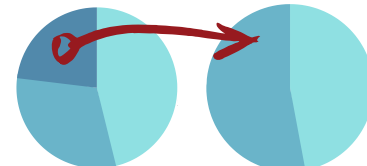
SOLUTION: Districts should be represented by candidates who have the support of a majority of voters. Not only does ranked choice voting allow for majority voting, because every candidate is seeking to be not only the first choice of each voter but also the second or third choice, RCV can make candidates more hesitant to engage in divisive campaign tactics.

GETTING TO A MAJORITY WITH RANKED CHOICE VOTING

Voters rank candidates on their ballots as their favorite candidate, their second favorite, their third favorite, etc.



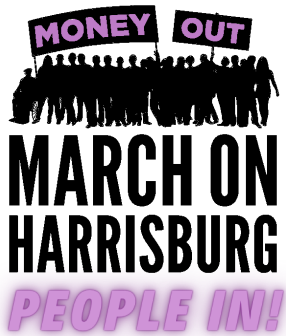
If no candidate wins a majority, then the candidate who received the fewest votes is eliminated, and votes that had been cast for the eliminated candidate are instantly re-cast for their second choice. This process may go several rounds until one candidate has a majority.



BENEFITS OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING

- Ensures majority support
- Decreases toxic campaigning^{4,5}
- Increases voter engagement^{6,7}
- Minimizes 'lesser of two evils' voting
- Increases representation of people of color⁸
- Increases representation of women⁸

1. Lappé Frances Moore, and Adam Eichen. Daring Democracy Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017 p 110
 2. FairVote.org. n.d. "Data on Ranked Choice Voting." FairVote. Accessed December 21, 2020. https://www.fairvote.org/data_on_rcv
 3. Lappé Frances Moore, and Adam Eichen. Daring Democracy Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017 p 111
 4. FairVote.org. n.d. "Data on Ranked Choice Voting." FairVote. Accessed December 21, 2020. https://www.fairvote.org/data_on_rcv
 5. Donovan, Todd, Caroline Tolbert, and Kellen Gracey. 2016. "Campaign Civility under Preferential and Plurality Voting." Electoral Studies 42 (June): 157-63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.02.009>
 6. FairVote.org. n.d. "Voter Turnout and Participation under RCV." FairVote. Accessed December 21, 2020. https://www.fairvote.org/research_rcvturnout
 7. "Deliberative Engagement." Smith, Civility 7.Pdf | Powered by Box." n.d. Accessed December 21, 2020. <https://fairvote.app.box.com/v/DeliberativeEngagement>
 8. John, Sarah. "The Alternative Vote Can Increase Representation of Women and People of Color in US Elections." FairVote, 27 July 2018. www.fairvote.org/the_alternative_vote_can_increase_representation_of_women_and_people_of_color_in_us_elections



GIFT BAN

PROBLEM: Currently, there are no limits on what lobbyists can give to public officials in Pennsylvania. Gifts valued at over \$250, or \$650 for travel, lodging, and hospitality must be reported, but there is no meaningful enforcement for failure to report gifts. Lobbyists use gifts to get what they want from the government and destroy trust between the People and the Legislature. Legislators should be responsive to the will of the public, not gift-giving lobbyists.

BACKGROUND:

In the 2019–20 session, because of our advocacy, HB1945: Gift Ban, introduced by Republican Representative Everett, passed the House State Government Committee but was never called to a vote on the floor of the House.² While we were assured by Majority Leader Benninghoff that he would have a vote on a gift ban bill in the 2021–22 session, that has not yet happened. Governor Wolf has called for a gift ban that applies across all of government and builds on his administration's executive order to ban gifts.

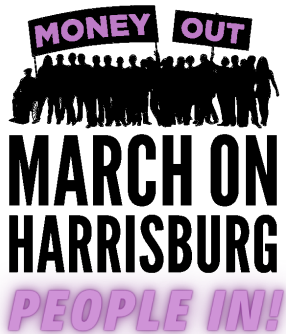
In 2018, lobbyists reported spending \$1.5 MILLION in gifts and hospitality but only 3% of that was reported by the Legislature.⁴

1. "Lobbyist Gift-Giving at Issue in More States." n.d. Accessed January 18, 2021. <http://pew.org/2v11265>.
2. "Pa. House Committee Advances Gift Ban Bill | Pennsylvania Capital-Star." n.d. Accessed January 18, 2021. <https://www.penncapital-star.com/government-politics/pa-house-committee-advances-gift-ban-bill/>.
3. "Legislator Gift Restrictions." n.d. Accessed January 18, 2021. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/ethics/50-state-table-gift-laws.aspx>.
4. "FINAL REPORT ON INVESTIGATION 1-2019: COMMONWEALTH LOBBYING DISCLOSURE LAW." 2019. House Government Oversight Committee. <http://www.reprogrve.com/Display/SiteFiles/418/GOC.Report.1.pdf>.

Pennsylvania is 1 OF 8 states with no specific law limiting gifts to public officials.³

SOLUTION: Our proposed Gift Ban bans the giving of anything valued at over \$10 annually to public officials and employees and their close family members from anyone who is not a relative. Every gift of any value (except family and friends) must be reported online within 10 days, and cash gifts of any amount are banned. Unlike the Governor's Gift Ban, this legislation allows for commonsense exceptions such as 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.





DEMOCRACY DOLLARS

PROBLEM: To be successful, 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. The majority of Pennsylvanians know this and view their state representatives, our government, and our democracy as untrustworthy.

BACKGROUND:

Two-thirds of countries around the world make public funding available to political parties; in Europe, almost 90 percent do.¹ The first argument for publicly funded elections in the US dates back to 1907, by then-President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1974, Congress passed the Federal Election Campaign Act to set limits on contributions by individuals, political parties and PACs, and to create public funding for presidential candidates, which helped save Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan's elections when they were being outspent.^{2,3} In 2000, the first election cycle after environmental, labor, and religious organizers formed a coalition to pass public campaign financing through ballot initiative in Maine, about one in three candidates utilized the funding.⁴ By 2006, 81 percent of candidates participated.⁵

In 2015,

72%

of Americans polled favor small-money matching funds.⁶

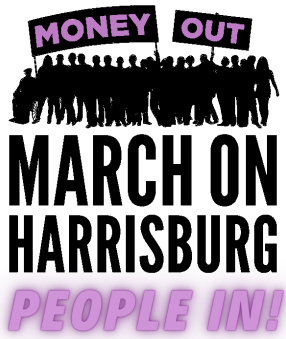
SOLUTION: Democracy Dollars are vouchers that residents receive and can then give to qualified candidates, who then exchange them for public funding to finance their campaign. When elected officials are dependent on their constituents for both the votes to get them elected and the campaign money necessary to run a competitive campaign, they are incentivized and rewarded for serving their constituents.

BENEFITS OF PUBLICLY FUNDED ELECTIONS

- Increases diversity of candidates, public office and donors
- Increases the number of candidates
- Builds trust between voters and candidates

1. Lappé Frances Moore, and Adam Eichen. Daring Democracy Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017 p 84
2. "Public Funding of Presidential Elections." n.d. FEC.Gov. Accessed December 22, 2020. <https://www.fec.gov/introduction-campaign-finance/understanding-ways-support-federal-candidates/presidential-elections/public-funding-presidential-elections/>.
3. Lappé Frances Moore, and Adam Eichen. Daring Democracy Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017 p 85
4. Lappé Frances Moore, and Adam Eichen. Daring Democracy Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017 p 82
5. Lappé Frances Moore, and Adam Eichen. Daring Democracy Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017 p 82
6. Lappé Frances Moore, and Adam Eichen. Daring Democracy Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017 p 89





DON'T GERRYMANDER THE STATE COURTS

PROBLEM: Judges in our courts have the job of applying the details of the law (as passed by the General Assembly) to the details of the case presented to them. Our justices are not supposed to represent regional interests. Electing judges by the district is dangerous because they will be rewarded for representing “their” district instead of doing their impartial duties according to the laws of the entire Commonwealth.

BACKGROUND:

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 the 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.¹ Stopping gerrymandering of the state courts means voting against the proposed constitutional amendment.

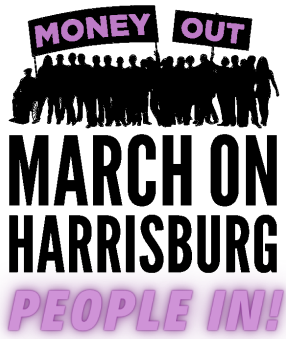
Currently,
only two states
elect courts using
regional, partisan
elections – Illinois
and Louisiana.²

SOLUTION: The proper role of our statewide courts is to impartially uphold the PA State Constitution and other statewide laws. There are legitimate issues with our courts and with our judicial elections, but judicial gerrymandering is the wrong solution to a flawed system. Changes like Ranked Choice Voting and Open Primaries would make our courts less partisan, and judicial campaign finance reform would make our elected justices less beholden to party and big money interests.

DANGERS OF JUDICIAL DISTRICTS

Undermines judicial independence
Values location over expertise
Mis-states relationship between judges and PA public
Opens the door to judicial gerrymandering

1. "Good Government Groups Say GOP Judicial Amendment Will 'Politicize' the Courts," n.d. WHY? (blog). Accessed December 29, 2020. <https://why.org/articles/republicans-move-to-give-themselves-friendlier-judges-as-critics-warn-of-a-dangerously-politicized-court/>.
2. "Judicial Selection in the States - Methods of Judicial Selection," n.d. Accessed December 29, 2020. http://www.judicialselection.us/judicial_selection/methods/selection_of_judges.cfm?state=



MAINTAIN, STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND VOTE BY MAIL

PROBLEM: The 2020 elections were the first time Pennsylvanians could vote from the safety of their home for any reason. Yet, there is still room for improvement in how the lifesaving policy is carried out.¹

BACKGROUND:

In 2019, after years of advocacy, lobbying, marching, and nonviolent direct action, MarchOnHarrisburg, along with other members of the democracy movement helped to pass the first substantial voting reform in PA since 1937. Act 77 included vote by mail which proved critical during the current pandemic, and also cut the registration deadline from 30 days before an election to 15 days before the election.²

In the 2020
General election
2.5 MILLION
Pennsylvanians opted
to vote securely and
safely by mail.

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

- Counties should send ballots with pre-paid return postage to every registered voter.
- Allow ballot envelopes to be examined as they are received and voters should be contacted to “cure” any disqualifying problems with their ballot submission.
- Vote-by-mail systems should be updated to state-of-the-art systems, including matching ballot signatures to existing 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.
- The requirements for vote-by-mail should be clarified so that all points that were challenged in court are clarified.
- Implement automatic voter registration
- Enact same-day registration
- Encourage early voting

1. Lai, Jonathan. n.d. “Pennsylvania Struggles with How — or If — to Help Voters Fix Their Mail Ballots.” <https://www.inquirer.com/politics/election/pennsylvania-flawed-mail-ballots-cure-20201029.html>.
2. “Governor Wolf Signs Election Reform Bill Including New Mail-in Voting.” 2019. Governor Tom Wolf (blog). October 31, 2019. <https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/governor-wolf-signs-election-reform-bill-including-new-mail-in-voting/>.