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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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Dec. 16, 2024

Al Schmidt, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Pennsylvania Department of State
401 North Street, Rm 302
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Schmidt:

The Nov. 5, 2024 election was a day that shall live in infamy for Cambria County and Pennsylvania, as the nation watched an embarrassing debacle unfold due to widespread, systemic failure in the scanning of ballots at the polls.

Each chapter in this Cambria County saga became more concerning than the last, starting with long lines and mass voter confusion. A judge extended voting by two hours. Initial belief a software problem was to blame. Fault later placed on incorrectly printed ballots that could not be electronically scanned. Sheriff's deputies conducted a mad afternoon dash to Allegheny County to collect and deliver to polling places a fresh batch of ballots that could be scanned. Post-election, a gaggle of volunteers were sworn in to duplicate ballots by hand so they could be counted. Then, a tedious and closely watched tabulation that took several days to provide final results.

I urge you to conduct a public hearing – and to use the full investigative powers of your office – to determine what went wrong in Cambria County, who was responsible and how we can ensure it never happens again.

If legislative action is required, I stand ready to introduce those bills without hesitation in the House of Representatives, so we never have a repeat that puts Cambria County and Pennsylvania in the national news for the wrong reason.

The people of Cambria County deserve honest answers as to how this snafu occurred and who is culpable – which I firmly believe won't be forthcoming from within Cambria County, given the insular and self-protecting nature of the existing local political structure. Its established modus operandi is best described as “the fox guarding the henhouse” and “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil,” while praying, fingers crossed, for a carpet big enough to sweep this under.

Your office, which is tasked with the duty to promote the integrity of the electoral process in our beloved Commonwealth, can and should provide the sorely-needed independent assessment of what went wrong in Cambria County in the Nov. 5, 2024 election. The people we work for as public servants deserve to know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Burns".

Frank Burns
State Representative
72nd Legislative District