



Representative Joanna McClinton | Phila City Council | Tuesday, Feb.15, 2022

Chairwoman Parker, Councilman Thomas, members of the Committee of Law and Government,

Thank you for allowing me to join you remotely today to discuss an issue that I am passionate about: promoting safe and secure elections and dismantling barriers to voting.

I am sure everyone here is as concerned as I am regarding the repeated assault on our democracy. Across the country and right here in our commonwealth, some of these attacks have been brazen - like the attack on our nation's capital on January 6, 2021 - while others have been more subtle, but equally dangerous to the long-term health of our commonwealth and its democratic institutions.

Whether it is contesting the results of the 2020 Presidential election and insisting on a taxpayer-funded Arizona-style audit, challenging the legality of "no excuse" mail-in voting, proposing election reforms to erect barriers to voting (specifically in urban areas), advancing plans to permanently gerrymander Pennsylvania's congressional districts, or weakening our state's system of checks and balances, all of these measures sow doubt in the integrity of our elections and election officials and threaten our commonwealth's most sacred institutions.

These threats on our democracy are simply too important to ignore. My colleagues in Harrisburg and I have concentrated our efforts on countering these bad policy ideas with real common-sense solutions to restore confidence and make voting safe and secure for everyone.

Instead of undermining our democracy, the House Democratic Caucus wants to strengthen it. Our bill, The K. Leroy Irvis Voting Rights Protection Act - or House Bill 2090 - is named in honor of the first and only Black Speaker of the Pennsylvania House, and it would ease burdens on voting, while bolstering our election security.

First, to allow for every eligible Pennsylvania to vote, we must make voting convenient whether you are a teacher, emergency responder or live in an assisted care facility. To accomplish this goal, the Irvis bill would permit early voting, provide for more ballot drop

boxes, and allow same day registration. These measures should not be controversial as each has already been adopted in other states.

Next, we need to finally listen to the election officials across the state who are on the frontlines of our election and voting systems, and answer their calls for assistance. The Irvis bill would make updates that our county election officials have requested including 21 days of pre-canvassing, where they can prepare mail-in and absentee ballots prior to Election Day.

Finally, everyone wants safe and secure elections, without that, the public will lack confidence in election outcomes. The Irvis bill would support election security by implementing statewide electronic poll books for secure real-time monitoring of election rolls, a practice currently used by nearly three dozen states.

I believe our K. Leroy Irvis Voting Rights Protection Act would go a long way toward stemming the repeated attack on voting rights and restoring the public's faith in our election system.

One thing is certain. The right to vote – a sacred right at the core of our national identity – is being challenged, and it will require all of us working together to ensure that the threats on our free and fair elections are not successful. Whether that is combatting the policy ideas that threaten the fairness of our elections, advocating for measures like the K. Leroy Irvis Voting Rights Protection Act, or urging our friends and neighbors to register to vote and to participate.

The stakes are high. Our communities can't afford inaction. Thank you.