



## **Independent Pennsylvanians**

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## **Philly Site of Presidential Commission on Election Administration Hearing Tomorrow: Independents to Speak Out on Election Process**

Independent Pennsylvanians, part of the national IndependentVoting.org network, will be speaking out at the upcoming public hearing of the President Obama's Commission on Election Administration to be held in Philadelphia on September 4<sup>th</sup> at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Room 102 – 103 from 8:00 am – 4:30 pm.

The 10-member body, brought about through an executive order, is tasked with studying best practices in election administration and presenting recommendations to the president about how to improve the voting experience. Currently there are over 1 million independent voters in Pennsylvania who are barred from voting in primary elections.

“Independents are deeply concerned that America's political process is in a crisis and agree this topic deserves serious attention,” said Jennifer Bullock of Independent Pennsylvanians. “But the Commission has already carved out a narrow mandate that turns away from the broad public debate we need to have. With 40% of Americans now identifying as independent, this should be a Commission priority. We are reaching out to our members around the state/region who are signing onto a letter to the Commission outlining our concerns. We will be testifying at the hearing and putting our message across that independents can't be treated as second class citizens in a democracy.”

The Commission has held public hearings in DC, Florida, and Denver to date at which representatives of independent voter groups have testified and attempted without success to engage the Commission about the specific barriers they face in the electoral process. In Colorado, representatives submitted a letter signed by 1,068 independents as well as written statements from independent voter activists in Arizona, California, Oregon, Utah and Nevada.

Local independent voter groups including Independent Pennsylvanians will be attending the remaining two hearings schedule for Philadelphia (9/4) and Ohio (9/20) to continue efforts to advise the Commission on the concerns of independent voters.

The letter from independents to the Commission in part reads:

We are glad that President Obama has formed a commission to look at some of the defects in the electoral process, though we feel the narrow mandate of the Commission falls short of the public debate we need to have. One example of these shortcomings is that there are specific defects that affect independent voters which the Commission does not seem prepared to address.

Independents are not accorded the same courtesies and privileges as members of political parties, such as receiving mailed ballots at home or having the right to serve as poll workers on Election Day. During primary season, where some states permit us to vote, we come face to face with poll workers who do not understand their own rules and frequently misinform us about our voting rights. We have no representation on the Federal Elections Commission or Boards of Elections, and are often required to register to vote as “unenrolled” or “undeclared” voters, not as the independents that we are. In many states, we are barred from primary voting altogether, even though we – as taxpayers – finance those closed party primaries.

As you go about your work to identify and recommend improvements to the voting experience, we urge you to recognize that the American people want a more non-partisan form of politics at every level. Please use the power the President has given you to be open and responsive to this need!

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