

OPINION COLUMN



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Spreading Awareness and Calming Fears This Election Season

We're in the final days of the 2020 election season and like most things this year, it is slated to be an election unlike any other. Political rhetoric and divisiveness is at an all-time high and there are a number of important elected positions on the ballot this year – including the president, all of Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation, the three state row offices, all 203 seats in the state House of Representatives and half of the state Senate seats. In addition to the number of contentious political races, new voting laws in Pennsylvania add another dynamic that could lead to possible delays in knowing the final outcomes of several of these races. As leaders in our communities, it is incumbent on us as chamber professionals to both encourage people to vote for pro-business candidates, while also reminding people to trust the electoral process and remain calm as we await the final results.

As I've noted before, the outcome of this election will have a significant impact on how Pennsylvania and the nation move forward in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is critically important that the business community participate in this election, to support candidates who will prioritize smart public policies that will help the state's economy rebound. To that end, I encourage you to direct your members to the PA Chamber's "Voter Resource" page on our [website](#). This page has links to important resources – including how those who intend to vote in-person can find their polling location; along with how to determine who their representatives are at the state and federal level. Additionally, you can find information on endorsements made by ChamberPAC, the political arm of the PA Chamber. This year, ChamberPAC has endorsed 111 candidates for the state General Assembly; along with Republican state Auditor General candidate Timothy DeFoor. Another important resource is our [Legislative Scorecard](#), which highlights how members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly voted on key pieces of legislation impacting the Commonwealth's business community over the course of the 2019-20 legislative session.

In addition to our "Get Out the Vote" efforts, the PA Chamber is also embarking on a campaign to assuage fear and confusion in the days following November 3. This is the first year that Pennsylvanians have the ability to vote by mail, and it is anticipated that up to 3 million Commonwealth voters will choose to cast their ballot via this method. While it is wonderful that this new voting process has garnered so much interest – especially in light of the ongoing pandemic – it adds another layer to tallying the total results for each race. Mail-in ballots cannot begin to be counted until Election Day – meaning there is a high likelihood that we won't know the official outcomes for some of the more contested races for several days – or even weeks – after the election. With the heightened partisan rhetoric that has been a trademark of this election cycle, this delay in results, as well as the final outcome, has the potential to lead to unrest. Now more than ever, it is important that we come together to call for civility and to trust the electoral process. Our democracy has been a shining example of how peaceful elections and transfers of power (should that be an outcome of an election) can exist. To that end, I encourage you to use your voice and communication channels to help spread this message and to help debunk any myths or rumors that may circulate on social media. There are resources available to help in this effort. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity, Infrastructure and Security Agency has created a #Protect2020 Rumor vs. Reality [website](#) dedicated to preemptively

discrediting disinformation. Additionally, the U.S. Chamber has developed a [resource page](#) aimed at promoting accurate and unbiased election information.

A safe and secure election is a staple of our democracy. In the coming days and weeks ahead, we hope you will join us in our efforts to ensure that this can be realized. As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions or feedback.

Gene Barr
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