**PENNSYLVANIA: A BATTLEGROUND STATE**

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Pennsylvania has a long history of being a key player in Presidential Elections. Pennsylvania has chosen 20 of the last 25 presidents. With 20 electoral votes up for grabs, Pennsylvania is considered by some to be the most important state in the 2020 Presidential Election. Some persons are concerned about the Election Process. They believe that the biggest challenge for Pennsylvania will be the rush of mail-in-ballots. COVID-19 is one of the main reasons why three million voters are expected to request mail-in-ballots. And as of October 13, 2020, 2.6 million registered voters had already applied for mail-in-ballots. Mail-in-ballots began being mailed to voters the end of September.

Would it not be wise to start counting these votes before November 3, 2020, so that the newly elected President could be declared the night or next morning of the election… or a couple of days later, but not weeks later! However, the Republican controlled state Legislature has so far refused to allow local election officials to start processing those ballots before election day.

On Oct. 9, 2020 a local Philadelphia judge rejected an attempt by the Trump Campaign to send poll watchers to Satellite Election Sites in Philadelphia. The judge ruled that Poll Watching was illegal and not allowed. President Trump also claimed that there would be voter fraud if Mail-in-Ballots were allowed. But the experts have not found any truth in this claim. Many persons that have voted by mail have not experienced any problem.

The Satellite Election Sites that are set up in the city allow persons to:

1. Register to Vote
2. The application to vote is processed
3. The person receives their ballot
4. Person votes at the site; puts ballot in the Drop Box

This is a very convenient way for individuals to cast their vote. Register and vote on the same day. Early voting, Mail-in-Ballots, lack of Poll Workers, Absentee Ballots, being prepared with provisional ballots… are grave concerns, but one must also look at the history of Pennsylvania as a Battleground State… and we would have a better understanding of how Presidential Elections have had a pattern in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania has swung from being a Republican leaning state during much of the 20th Century, to being a notable Battleground State in presidential elections. Pennsylvania backed the Democratic Presidential Candidate in every election since 1992, up until 2016 when President Donald trump won by 44,292 votes over Hillary Clinton. More than 6,000,000 votes were cast. Trump won by .72%, which is less than 1% of the votes. This was the narrowest margin in a presidential election for the state of Pennsylvania in 176 years, when William Henry Harrison defeated Martin Van Buren by just .12%. What happened to Pennsylvania in the 2016 election? Two hundred-forty thousand African Americans who were registered to vote did not vote!

**What really makes Pennsylvania such a Battleground State?** Pennsylvania’s geography is very expansive and diverse. Its people of are diverse backgrounds. The size of Pennsylvania could account for five states. Pennsylvania has 12,000,000 people. Voters who live in the heartland, (farm belt) of Pennsylvania, have helped Republicans maintain control of the Senate since 1994 and the House for the majority of 25 years. Gerrymandering has also helped. But the House was flipped on November 6, 2018 to Democratic control.

The heartland of Pennsylvania has 59,000 farms, and 9 million agriculture acres. Dairy farming, cattle and poultry raising is the most important livestock industries. Pennsylvania ranks first in the nation in the production of mushrooms, producing 443 billion pounds each year. Livestock products make up 69% of Pennsylvania’s yearly income.

If you visit the Northeast and Southwest corners, you will find Pennsylvanians who come from a longline of blue-collar workers in the old coal and steel industries. Now some of these persons are working in the oil and gas industry. Voters in these areas elected Democrats for decades, but in the last 10 years they gradually began to vote for republicans. They are a big reason that President Trump won the state by 44,000 votes, less that 1 percent in 2016.

Pharmaceutical and technology companies are plentiful in the suburbs of Philadelphia and Pittsburg; and health care jobs are abundant across the state. College educated women in these areas helped to propel a record number of women to state and federal legislative positions in the 2018 midterm. These votes are expected to play a major role in deciding the Presidential Election this year.

In the northeast corner of the state of Pennsylvania, Erie has been a Democratic stronghold, but was one of the counties that flipped to Republican in the 2016 Presidential election. Erie is geographically unique in Pennsylvania with a shoreline along one of the Great Lakes, but is politically similar to the northeast and southeast corners with the abundance of working class votes.

The cities in Pennsylvania including Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Allentown, Harrisburg, Lancaster, York, and more have reliably voted for Democrats. Those votes are seeping into the suburbs, even in southcentral Pennsylvania’s agricultural and manufacturing belt where Republicans typically outnumber Democrats. The GOP still has the registration advantage in a seven-county region that includes big names like Hershey’s, Utz, and Harley-Davidson. But more votes are switching to the Democratic Party in Southeastern Pennsylvania than to the Republican Party. This seemed to have started in 2019.

Jeffrey Lord, Political Analyst from Camp Hill, who served as Associate Political Director in the Reagan White House says, “Pennsylvania has always been a swing state. Culturally, that is who we are.” President Trump is not the sole determining factor in Pennsylvania being a swing or Battleground State; it is the culture of Pennsylvania. The U.S. Constitution was written here. Democrats have always been able to attract Republicans. Former President Barack Obama had ripe conditions in 2008 as a change candidate after eight years of Republican President George W. Bush, who led the country into a recession.”

This year is an exciting Presidential Election, with lots of momentum. So do your part. Get involved in the voter registration… election process. Help your seniors with their Mail-in-Ballots.

Make sure all of your family and friends are registered and voting this year. There are several organizations in every city working to “Get Out the Vote.” So get involved; be resourceful; be a part of the change that is coming. And let us all pray that the election process be done decently and in order.

“For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one and setteth up another.” Psalm 75:6, 7 KJV

**God is still in charge!!!**

Reverence: Candy Woodall, USA Today Network