

TO: Malcolm Burnley, The Philadelphia Citizen
FROM: Candidates for Philadelphia City Commissioner
DATE: April 25, 2019

SUBJECT: Selection of new voting machines

Of all the challenges that election officials face, the selection of a new voting system is certainly the one with the highest stakes. The voters of Philadelphia deserved an open, thorough and responsible procurement process, but didn't get one.

We have come together as candidates for Philadelphia City Commissioner to say that despite the hard work and professionalism of the civil service staffers who keep voter registration and our elections running, the Commissioners have failed to responsibly carry out their central duty: to make sure that all eligible Philadelphians will be able to vote and that our elections will be as accurate, fair and secure as possible.

At the center of the ongoing voting machine fiasco is the approval on February 20 by Commissioners Lisa Deeley and Al Schmidt of the purchase of ES&S ExpressVote XL hybrid machines using the previously untested "best value" procurement process. The Protect Our Vote Coalition has pointed out and documented serious shortcomings in this procurement up to this point: ignoring best-value procurement guidelines; lack of transparency and public input; bias toward a preferred vendor's most expensive product; and apparent violations of the Ethics Code and Election Code. The Commissioners who voted to approve the new machines on February 20 were already candidates for re-election under the state's definition and therefore ineligible to serve on the Board of Elections and participate in that vote.

We applaud the Protect Our Vote Coalition's participation in weekly Board of Elections meetings, and we applaud City Controller Rebecca Rhynhart for urging the Board to vacate the Commissioners' decision and to restart the voting system selection process.

Rhynhart has explained in detail why the Board should vacate the decision and issue a new RFP, and she has issued subpoenas aimed at finding out how it happened. State Auditor General Eugene DePasquale said he has "serious concerns about the process" and urged City Council to "review it carefully." To his credit, City Commissioner Anthony Clark stated on April 10 that he agrees with Rhynhart, as do we.

The result of the flawed process devised by the Commissioners is a voting system that lacks the security, resilience, usability, and accessibility Philadelphia needs. Among its many shortcomings: it tallies bar codes instead of human-readable text failing to meet the recommendations of the Pennsylvania Blue Ribbon Commission; and its accessibility features for people with disabilities are poorly implemented. It would also cost \$15-20 million more than other options.

We do not believe this was the right decision, and we do not believe it was made properly.

Other counties are meeting state requirements for more secure and verifiable voting systems through processes that welcome expert and public involvement and can be seen to be honest and transparent. They are implementing new systems more quickly, at much lower cost, and without controversy. Montgomery County did so and is implementing its new system in May. Allegheny County is just starting now; its [new voting systems website](#) is a model of clarity and transparency. Philadelphia could do the same.

Proper oversight of our elections, improved voter registration and increased confidence in our democracy here in Philadelphia can happen only with election officials who are competent and trustworthy, and who value public input. We urge the voters of Philadelphia to ensure that the next complement of Commissioners is not dominated by members who are selected and funded by particular political interest groups to whom they are answerable. The Office of the City Commissioners must answer to the people of Philadelphia and no one else.

That we can all cast our votes and trust the results is the bedrock of our democracy. To safeguard and guarantee that is the core responsibility of our election officials, and it is a responsibility that each of us pledges to uphold.

Signed,

Moira Bohannon

Luigi Borda

Carla Cain

Marwan Kreidie

Dennis Lee