



## Alianza connects people. So do you.

To our customers, thank you for the amazing broadband and communications that you deliver to your community.

### THANKS FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP



[www.alianza.com](http://www.alianza.com) [info@alianza.com](mailto:info@alianza.com)



October 8, 2020

***Johnstown Tribune-Democrat***

**[Responders: AT&T cell tower upgrades will be beneficial](#)**

***Allentown Morning Call***

**[Republicans continue to eat away at Democrats' voter registration advantage in Pennsylvania](#)**

***Philadelphia Inquirer***  
**[College students in Pennsylvania face new barriers to vote in a pandemic](#)**

***Spotlight PA***  
**[Judge dismisses suit by top Pa. senator's campaign against Spotlight PA journalist, others](#)**

***Philadelphia Inquirer***  
**[Philly and Pennsylvania are gearing up to protect the election from Trump](#)**

***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***  
**[Report that Trump may hold campaign event next week in Pittsburgh spurs criticism](#)**

***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***  
**[Editorial: Focus on Pennsylvania's real election needs](#)**

***Pittsburgh Tribune-Review***  
**[Editorial: Toomey is example to Senate successor](#)**

COVID funding is being used to get internet services to all of Schuylkill County, Pa., one of its commissioners said. The semi-annual Legislative Forum hosted by the Manufacturers and Employers Association Friday morning turned into a free-wheeling discussion about the many facets of the pandemic.

With the state House of Representatives having canceled its voting session Thursday after a Franklin County representative tested positive for the coronavirus, the only legislator who attended the forum was Sen. David G. Argall, R-29, Rush Twp. But also in attendance were all three Schuylkill County commissioners — George Halcovage, Barron “Boots” Heatherington and Gary Hess. Halcovage said one of the initiatives the commissioners are tackling with some of the county’s COVID money is broadband. “We are working together with the school districts, setting up some different microwaves,” Halcovage said. “We’re getting out into underserved areas, like some places in the Tri-Valley School District, the Williams Valley, the Blue Mountain School District, or up in the North Schuylkill School District.”

Halcovage said getting internet service is not only crucial for education — when students have to get their education at home, like during the pandemic — but it is also crucial for retention of employees. “The training the MAEA provides not only for our manufacturers, but for the schools with the YES program, is off the charts,” Halcovage said, referring to the Your Employability Skills program, a one-credit program taught in high schools that teaches students soft skills like showing up to work on time and dressing properly.

Halcovage also said the Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board “does a phenomenal job getting employees into great” programs. “What we heard today is employee recruitment is so crucial,” said the current MAEA chairwoman, Julie Masser Ballay, of Sterman-Masser. “When we think about quality of life for our employees and what people look for to try and bring employees into this area, and get them to stay in this area, broadband is just one example that becomes so huge.”

Christine Jensen, site administrator for Pennsylvania CareerLink in Luzerne County and LSWIB, said there is funding available to retain employees. “We had a very successful summer internship program,” Jensen said. “We were able to reimburse employers for hiring interns and creating a pipeline for your next employee by getting them to stay in Northeast Pennsylvania.” In the last nine years, employers were reimbursed more than \$1 million for on-the-job training, she said.

Argall said there have been a number of bills put forward in the House regarding COVID-19 liability protection. “There was some movement in the House this week,” he said. “There was a bill that was moving that had the support of some of the state’s legal community. There was another bill that was moving that had the support of manufacturers and chambers of industry. They tried to merge them together.”

Carl Marrara, vice president of government affairs for the Pennsylvania Manufacturers Association, said there are seven business organizations calling for safe labor protections. “There’s some really good language that includes a safe harbor for businesses that are operating safely to be protected, but there is a really bad piece connected with this called a false claims act which is being sought by trial lawyers in the Philadelphia area,” Marrara said.

Argall said the courts have been “heavily involved” in COVID issues, including Thursday’s appeals court ruling that allows Gov. Tom Wolf’s indoor and outdoor crowd size restrictions can remain in effect for now. Argall has been critical of many of Wolf’s actions in response to the pandemic. “In the beginning, people were patient,” he said. “That is over.” He predicts the crowd size battle is far from over. “Ultimately, I think it is going to go to the United States Supreme Court,” he said. — ***Government Technology***

Closed-door talks on updating Pennsylvania's fledgling mail voting law showed signs of life Wednesday amid warnings that doing nothing will risk [a dragged-out vote count](#) in the high-stakes presidential election in [the battleground state](#). House Republicans held an internal conference call to discuss the idea of giving counties four or five days to process mail ballots before Election Day and to set down security requirements for the drop boxes that some counties are using to help collect mail-in ballots.

Leaders of the House and Senate Republican majorities declined interviews. Through a spokesperson, House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff (R., Centre) said the House Republican priority continues to be legislation that passed a month ago, nearly along party lines, and was met with a veto threat by Gov. Tom Wolf, a Democrat. Wednesday's House Republican discussion did not involve elements of that month-old legislation opposed by many Democratic lawmakers and Wolf, such as lifting the county residency restriction on party or campaign representatives who observe inside polling places.

Another sticking point of that legislation is a provision outlawing the drop boxes and [satellite election offices](#) that are being used by many of the most heavily populated counties to help collect mail ballots, Democrats said. Meanwhile, the top priority of counties is to get the ability to process mail ballots before Election Day — called pre-canvassing — as they face the prospect of digging into 3 million envelopes or more when polls open on Nov. 3.

Processing ballots before Election Day would speed up the vote count and give it more public credibility, county officials say, warning that a presidential election result otherwise could hang in limbo for days on a drawn-out vote count in Pennsylvania. "We are in the position where the best thing we could do right now is to allow for four or five days of pre-canvassing, and some security stuff that can be put in there," said Rep. Garth Everett (R., Lycoming). "But we just need to get it done."

The talks are happening in the shadow of President Donald Trump's claims at [a recent rally near Harrisburg](#) that the only way he can lose Pennsylvania to Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden is if Democrats cheat, a claim he also made in 2016's election. In last week's debate with Biden, [Trump baselessly suggested that widespread election fraud is afoot in Philadelphia](#) as he urged his supporters to serve as poll watchers and said he would not go along with an election result if he sees "tens of thousands of ballots being manipulated."

Neither the House or Senate are scheduled to return to session until Oct. 19. Wolf administration officials want compromise legislation by mid-October, at the latest, to give counties time to incorporate the 11th-hour changes. Rep. Russ Diamond (R., Lebanon) suggested that allowing pre-canvassing before Election Day and adding security requirements for drop boxes is a realistic avenue since drop boxes are already being used in some counties where ballots have been mailed out to people who applied for them. "So are we going to change mid-stream?" Diamond asked.

Some House Republicans said they are angry at being accused by Democrats in recent weeks of trying to suppress the vote — particularly in the Democratic bastion of Philadelphia — during debates over election-related legislation in recent weeks. "It's very difficult in today's hyper-politicized arena to move significant election reforms this close to an election," said Rep. Jesse Topper (R., Bedford). In the meantime, litigation over the mechanics of Pennsylvania's election, vote counting and poll watching is pending in Philadelphia's courts, the state Supreme Court, federal court in Pittsburgh and the U.S. Supreme Court. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*

---

Just think, in four short weeks it'll all be over but the shouting. And, if predictions hold, we'll all be in the middle of the shouting. About voting

irregularities. Election theft. Voter fraud. With mail-in ballots still being counted and election results uncertain. Or not.

Maybe our 67 counties manage a miracle, run things smoothly, count the votes and call the winner. Never mind it took nearly three weeks for that to happen after the June primary – with half the mail-in votes expected now. (Then it was 1.5 million. Now we're looking at 3 million.) But certainly, we'll do better this time. And no pressure. Just that we're the national tell for Campaign 2020: he who wins here wins the White House.

Which makes one wonder, where's the state as we head to the stretch? Well, virtually all recent polls of Pa. say Joe Biden leads President Trump. An [ABC News/Washington Post](#) poll puts Biden up 9 points. A new Monmouth poll says Biden's up 11. A new Reuters poll has Biden up 5. A [CBS/YouGov poll and a New York Times/Sienna College poll](#) both put Biden up 7. A [Quinnipiac University poll](#) released Wednesday afternoon gives Biden a 13-point edge among likely voters.

Consistent and stable. Is this thing done? I reached out to national political pundit Larry Sabato, he of "[Sabato's Crystal Ball](#)" at the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. His ratings say Pennsylvania "leans" to Biden. "It's not done," says Sabato, "because of the Electoral College. You'd rather be Biden than Trump as of now, but Biden could win the popular vote by even more than Hillary Clinton did (2.8 million) and still lose the College. "As of today, it doesn't look that like that's going to happen, but with almost four weeks left in this crazy campaign in a cursed year, does anyone want to bet the house that nothing else could happen that could matter?"

Uh, no. Pollsters say so much happens every week it's hard for them to keep up. Yet the structure of the race, reliant on contests in half a dozen states, barely changes, even after things that "could matter" happen. For example, Biden got only slight boosts in battleground states after Trump reduced their first debate to an eighth-grade cafeteria fight.

It was juvenile. Trump's boorish-brat behavior. Biden's schoolyard retorts. They needed timeout chairs. Facing a wall. The commentariat said Biden won. But polls in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Florida showed little change. Biden still up but not by much. Same with Trump's COVID-19 diagnosis and hospitalization. Polls in key states reflect no Trump sympathy bump, no great gains for Biden. In contrast, national polls after these events show big Biden bumps: [NBC/Wall Street Journal](#), Biden up 14; [CNN poll](#), Biden up 16. But the only polls that matter are in states critical to winning the Electoral College. And they're essentially static.

As of this writing, the [Real Clear Politics average](#) of polling in six battleground states (Pa., Florida, Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina) puts Biden up 4.7 points. At the end of August, in these states, he was up 3. "Nothing much has changed," says Berwood Yost, director of Franklin & Marshall College's Center for Opinion Research, "Right now it's just chipping away at the margins." He adds, because the number of "truly undecided voters" in those states is so small, almost nothing changes voters' minds.

Christopher Borick, Muhlenberg College pol-sci prof and pollster, agrees: "Opinions are hardened...I don't know what could move voters at this point." But as Sabato asks, want to bet nothing significant happens in coming weeks? What if, for any reason, there are no more debates? Or no more Trump rallies? What if a COVID-19 "second wave" hits, impacting turnout? We've got an election like no other, in a year like no other. Don't be surprised if we see a result reflecting that. A blow-out? A photo finish followed by months of legal fights? Post-election games with Electoral College members to override a key state's popular vote?

How about [an Electoral College tie](#) in which the U.S. House elected in November decides the winner in January? Not by a full House vote (currently

D-controlled), but by a vote of the 50 state delegations (currently R-controlled). And if that happened? Pennsylvania, touted 2020 Campaign Decider, could be sidelined. Its House delegation is evenly split, 9 R's/9 D's. If it stays that way after November, does Pa. play fierce tug-of-war or simply get no vote? Lots of questions. But take heart. At some point, it'll all be over. Hopefully, even the shouting. – **John Baer's column in *Harrisburg Patriot-News***



**Broadband  
Cable Association  
of Pennsylvania**

127 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101  
717-214-2000 (f) 717-214-2020  
bcapa.com

First in Broadband.  
The Future of Broadband.®