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SECRETARY OF STATE, ATTORNEY GENERAL REMIND PENNSYLVANIANS OF PROTECTIONS AND PENALTIES FOR VOTER INTIMIDATION

Harrisburg, PA - Pennsylvania Secretary of State Pedro A. Cortés and Attorney General Bruce R. Beemer today reminded voters that Pennsylvania and federal laws protect them from intimidation at the polling places and any intimidation could result in fines and jail time.

Any activity that threatens, harasses or intimidates voters, including any activity that is intended to, or has the effect of, interfering with any voter's right to vote, whether it occurs outside the polling place or inside the polling place, is illegal.

"Discouraging anyone from having their voice be heard in the electoral process – whether by intimidation, suppression or deception – is absolutely unacceptable and wrong," Secretary Cortés said. "Any attempts to disrupt or interfere with voting by Pennsylvanians should and will be investigated and prosecuted by law enforcement. It is important that elections officials at all levels, law enforcement and, most importantly, citizens remain vigilant and report any such behavior."

"The integrity of the electoral system is at the heart of the democratic process," Attorney General Beemer said. "The Office of Attorney General is prepared to provide assistance to ensure that eligible voters have the opportunity to cast their votes in a safe environment."

Federal law states that election officials and private citizens are prohibited from conspiring with others to deprive a voter of his or her right to vote. Individuals who conspire to interfere with a person's right to vote can face up to 10 years in prison.

Pennsylvania law prohibits any person or corporation to directly or indirectly practice intimidation or coercion by force, violence, restraint, or threat to induce or compel a person to vote or refrain from voting for a candidate or on a political issue. It is also illegal to use abduction, duress, coercion, or any other forcible or fraudulent means to impede, prevent or otherwise interfere with a person's right to vote. Individuals who intimidate voters can be fined up to \$5,000 and face up to two years in prison.

Examples of voter intimidation and discriminatory conduct include disseminating false or misleading election information and aggressive behavior inside or outside the polling place.

Further, election officials are prohibited under federal law including the U.S. Constitution, the Voting Rights Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act from discriminating against voters based on race, ethnicity, national origin, language, disability or religion, or from allowing any discriminatory conduct by private actors to

affect voters. Individuals who discriminate against voters can be fined up to \$5,000 and face up to five years in prison.

Individuals who witness voter intimidation or who are victims of voter intimidation should report the incident to their County Board of Elections and County District Attorney. Each County Board of Elections is required to investigate alleged violations and report them to the District Attorney, who has the authority to prosecute such violations.

The Department of State recently released a guidance on voter intimidation, which can be accessed [here](#) and provides more detail on laws prohibiting intimidation and examples of voter intimidation and discriminatory conduct.

Voters can find their county election contact [here](#) and their local district attorney's office [here](#). Election complaints can also be made on the Department of State's [website](#) or by calling 1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772).