

RE: Voters' Choice Act, SB 195

Dear Representatives of Pennsylvania:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” —Martin Luther King Jr.

The *Independent Gazette*, along with Sanity Check radio, now plans to take our NEPA initiative concerning the Voters' Choice Act (VCA), statewide. Your responses will be printed in our Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Pocono editions. Our radio show airs in northeastern Pennsylvania Saturday morning, and in the Philadelphia market Saturday evening and the VCA will be discussed extensively on those programs also.

We are pleased to announce that all three northeastern Pennsylvania state Senators, Baker, Blake, and Yudichak, are co-sponsors of SB 195.

Article 1, Section 5 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania states:

Elections shall be free and equal; and no power, civil or military, shall at any time interfere to prevent the free exercise of the right of suffrage.

As widely acknowledged, elections are anything but free and equal in Pennsylvania.

We have a primary process that excludes the largest growing electorate in the state, the “independent voter,” from participating in that process unless that voter joins a special club, either the Democratic or Republican Parties. Not only are these unaffiliated voters not allowed to vote in primary elections, but they are taxed so that the Democrats and Republicans can select their general election candidates at public expense. “No taxation without representation” is ringing true again.

In the 2013 and 2014 election cycles any candidate wishing to run for statewide office from either of the so-called major parties is required to submit 2,000 signatures to appear on the primary ballot. A candidate wishing to run on any other ticket will be required to submit over 60,000 nomination signatures for inclusion on the general ballot—this is not “free and equal.”

We are asking you to respond to very specific questions which are not intended as typical “gotcha” questions, but really do get to the heart of the matter and should indicate where you stand on this matter. We are letting you know the questions beforehand, so you have sufficient time to formulate your response. That being said, we are

also not looking for, nor will we view favorably, “political speak.” With our men and women in uniform dying all over the world so other nations may experience free and equal elections abroad, we should require nothing less right here. We expect straightforward answers, as this is *the* civil rights issue of our day in Pennsylvania.

Please respond to the following.

1. Do you believe it is your duty to defend and protect the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania?
2. Do you support free and equal elections?
3. Will you co-sponsor SB 195, the Voters’ Choice Act, if you are a senator? Will you be willing to introduce the bill or co-sponsor it if you are a member of the House?
4. If you will not co-sponsor SB 195, what solution(s) would you propose to ensure that elections are indeed free and equal for the voters of Pennsylvania with regard to the primary election practices, in particular, as well as the general election signature requirements?

Please email your response to **editor.wilkesbarrescranton@thewbig.com**, or return via mail by November 15 to:

Independent Gazette

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