



DYSFUNCTION IN OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM IS THE #1 ISSUE LIMITING AMERICA'S ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Our political system has become the major barrier to solving nearly every important challenge our nation needs to address. In fact, according to a 2017 [Harvard Business School report](#), dysfunction in America's political system is now the single greatest barrier to U.S. economic progress.

Most businesspeople agree that political polarization and the gridlock it creates are putting our country's future at risk. Such systemic failures make it almost impossible to address rising health care costs, income inequality, immigration, environment, and a decaying infrastructure. Hyper-partisanship stymies collaboration, innovation, and long-term thinking. These factors contribute to our country losing its competitive economic advantage — and that hurts every American.

In many ways, business interests are aligned with the public interest in establishing a well-functioning democracy. A productive, sustainable economy requires cooperation, compromise, and civility. While some entrenched businesses may benefit from political dysfunction, most do not. It's time to study the root causes of this dynamic and change the rules governing our political system in DC and Harrisburg.

OUR VISION TO REINVIGORATE OUR DEMOCRACY

We believe that the health of our representative democracy can be measured by five key outcomes:

1. ***Deliver pragmatic and effective solutions for our nation's most pressing challenges in ways that expand opportunity.*** Today's political systems on the state and federal level almost universally fail to deliver those solutions.
2. ***Take bipartisan action and avoid polarizing gridlock.*** Our political system incentivizes partisanship and gridlock, undermining bipartisan consensus building. Meanwhile voters lack effective leverage to punish politicians who obstruct progress.
3. ***Achieve broad-based public consensus over time.*** One important marker of a good solution is that the public acceptance and consensus behind it grows over time. Critical to this outcome is a robust political conversation that educates voters about available policy options and the need for rational compromises to achieve solutions.
4. ***Respect our Constitution and the rights of all citizens.*** The work of democracy is never done. We must strive continually to protect the rights and obligations enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, moving ever closer to the vision of democracy that America was founded upon.
5. ***Run modern, secure, and trustworthy elections.*** Pennsylvania's election security has been rated among the most vulnerable in the nation. In 2018, more than 80% of Pennsylvanians voters used machines that have no way to audit and verify the vote count. Continued reliance on undependable, 15- to 20-year old election systems calls into question government effectiveness, undermining trust in government and ultimately harming our business climate and economy.

OUR STRATEGY TO REFORM PENNSYLVANIA POLITICS

Our government's failure to deliver better outcomes is structurally imbedded in our political system. We need to take bold steps to change the very rules and incentives underpinning our politics.

BFA is educating and mobilizing business leaders to support bold, bipartisan initiatives designed to strengthen our democracy by encouraging political competition and increasing citizen participation.

Here is our **policy agenda** to improve the health of democracy in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Open Primaries to Independent Voters

The current closed, partisan primary system shifts campaigns and governance toward political extremes, disenfranchises a huge swath of the Pennsylvania electorate, and undermines competition. All these factors suppress voter turnout. Pennsylvania is one of just 11 states with closed primaries. Bipartisan consensus is growing in the General Assembly to open up Pennsylvania's primaries to independent voters, not just registered party voters.

Ranked-Choice Voting with Instant Runoff in General Elections

Most of Pennsylvania's electoral districts lack competitive general elections. Under ranked-choice voting, voters rank candidates by order of preference rather than simply choosing one candidate. The candidates with the greatest number of votes then go through an instant-runoff process. Currently the law in Maine, ranked-choice voting restores robust political competition by removing the "spoiler effect" and ensuring the election of candidates with the broadest appeal to the most voters.

Early Voting

Pennsylvania is an outlier when it comes to early voting. More than two-thirds of the United States has some form of early voting. Early voting provides important relief to shift employees and first responders whose work schedule may prevent them from voting on Election Day. For all voters, early voting options make it easier and more convenient to participate, leading to a dramatic increase in voter turnout.

- **No-Excuse Absentee Ballot Voting.** Pennsylvania voters may only cast absentee ballots with a valid "excuse" for not voting in person: work keeps them outside the county, an illness or disability, or religious observance. Even when a job won't permit time off for voting, absentee ballots aren't available to those still physically present in the county. No-excuse absentee ballots allow any voter to cast their vote by mail. Some states even provide the option to vote by mail permanently.
- **Early In-Person Voting.** This reform allows voters to cast their ballots early, either at their county board of elections or at convenient early voting locations in each county.

Same-Day Registration and Automatic Voter Registration

Fifteen states allow registration on the day of an election, and many states now register voters automatically, allowing voters to "opt-out." Research in 2014 concluded that same-day registration can increase voter participation by up to 4 percentage points, with automatic voter registration increasing participation even more. Greater voter participation translates into increased competition for votes, the election of candidates with broader public appeal, and overall improved civic health.

Funding to Secure Pennsylvania's Election Infrastructure Against Cyberattacks

Cybersecurity experts warn that the breach of one state's election system could undermine trust in election results across our entire nation. A recent Department of Homeland Security report concluded that "Russian government cyber actors probably conducted research and reconnaissance against all US states' election networks."

Pennsylvania government needs to reach an agreement on how to reimburse counties for the purchase of secure voting technology for the 2020 election. We must also replace our statewide voter registration system, which is more than a decade old and vulnerable to hacking, as well as fund cybersecurity training for election workers and regular testing of elections systems.

GET INVOLVED WITH BUSINESS FOR AMERICA

If you share our conviction that Pennsylvania can lead the country toward a healthier democracy, we invite you to be part of this important endeavor. Together, we will transform our nation's political landscape and establish a government of which we can all be proud.

We're looking for civic-minded business leaders, businesses, and business associations throughout the Keystone state who are ready to take action today.

- **Opportunities to Take Action.** Receive curated invitations to engage with lawmakers, government officials, and the voting public. Receive briefings, participate in events, and appear at legislative hearings. Make the business case for reform in op-eds, testimony and media appearances.
- **Shape Our Priorities.** As a member-driven organization, you can help guide our agenda and strategy to create change. Work directly with lawmakers, political experts, and our policy and technology advisors to identify the most impactful opportunities.
- **Exclusive Networking.** Business for America is the premier network for business leaders who are passionate about the future of democratic society. Connect with peers at our salons, briefings, and summits.
- **Grow Our Reach.** Extend our impact by connecting BFA with business leaders from your network who want to help reinvigorate American democracy. Help build public support for needed reforms.

[Join Our Advisory Council](#)

As a member-driven organization, you can help guide our agenda and strategy to create change.

[Contribute Your Expertise](#)

Put your expertise to work on policy, networking, fundraising, events, and more.

[Donate](#)

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we rely on support from individuals, businesses, and foundations. We welcome your financial contribution.

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