



**DELAWARE**  
**VOTING RIGHTS**  
**COALITION**

# Voting Rights Advocacy Training

A Virtual Training Hosted by the Delaware Voting Rights Coalition

# Agenda:

- The Delaware Voting Rights Coalition
  - HB 75
  - Vote By Mail
  - Same-Day Registration (HB 25)
- Constituent Meetings 101

# The Delaware Voting Rights Coalition

# Welcome!

## Who are we?

- Delaware's first statewide coalition of voting rights organizations and advocates.
- Advocates encouraging voters and policy makers to consider reforms that will improve access to voting.
- Our focus: empowering communities, especially communities of color, people who speak English as a second language, people involved in the justice system, and young people, to identify and remedy barriers to the ballot box.
- We work with legislators, local election officials, and the Department of Elections to make these reform recommendations a reality.

## What is today's purpose?

- To equip you with knowledge & skills to advocate for voting rights while speaking with legislators.



# HB 75: Constitutional Amendment

# HB 75

- **HB 75 WOULD PERMIT NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING:**
  - This bill allows for changes to the current laws governing absentee voting.
  - It is the second leg of a constitutional amendment that would eliminate from the Delaware Constitution the limitations as to who is eligible to vote by absentee ballot.
  - It provides that the General Assembly shall enact general laws providing the circumstances, rules, and procedures for absentee voting.
  - This paves the way for no-excuse absentee voting!
- **HB 75 Amends the Delaware Constitution, Art. V § 4A:**
  - “The General Assembly shall enact general laws providing the circumstances, rules, and procedures by which registered voters may vote by absentee ballot.”



# HB 75

- **Who are Currently Eligible Absentee Voters?**

Qualified registered voters who shall be unable to appear to cast their ballot at any primary, school board or general election at the regular polling place of the election district in which they are registered, either

- because of being in the public service of the United States or of this State, or a spouse or dependents residing with or accompanying them,
- because of the nature of their business or occupation, including caregivers, students, and eligible incarcerated people,
- because of sickness or physical disability,
- because of absence from the district while on vacation,
- because of the tenets or teachings of their religion, or
- because of temporarily residing outside of the US, or are a spouse or dependents residing with or accompanying them.

- **Importantly, public health restrictions or fears are not included as qualifying reasons for not appearing on Election Day, which is why we need new legislation in 2022.**

# HB 75

- **Why Delaware needs no-excuse absentee voting.**

- No excuse absentee voting is a form of voting that allows anyone to request and submit an absentee ballot by mail, with no excuse needed.
- Delaware's Constitution is one of the most restrictive in the nation on voting rights, only recognizing six excuses for a person to be considered an absentee voter. 34 other states have permanent no excuse absentee voting or universal vote by mail programs. Delaware along with 13 southern states only allows absentee voting for a specific reason.
- Safe and secure absentee voting has existed for nearly 80 years in Delaware – our elections officials know how to ensure that every registered voter's ballot counts, whether cast in-person, by mail, or at early-vote locations.
- Our right to vote outside of the confines of a polling station shouldn't be limited to only specific circumstances. People may want to vote absentee to:
  - Take time to study the issues and candidates on their ballot and get questions answered;
  - Decreases the number of people voting in-person and/or avoid long lines and wait times on Election Day;
  - Plan for any unexpected threat that emerges, including, but not limited to, another pandemic.

# Vote By Mail & Same-Day Registration

# Vote By Mail

- **What is vote by mail?**
  - Registered voters may request a mail ballot before the election that may be returned either by mail or at a designated drop-off location.
- **Why is it important that Vote by Mail be made available in Delaware in 2022?**
  - More than 160K Delawareans voted by mail in 2020, compared to only 25K in 2016. But the vast majority of those voters won't be eligible to vote by mail in 2022 unless they qualify as absentee voters.
- **How does Delaware compare with other states?**
  - 34 other states have permanent universal vote-by-mail eligibility.
- **Absentee vs. Vote By Mail?**
  - Vote by Mail is a method of voting that all Delawareans could choose to do, whether they are absent for a constitutionally authorized reason or just because they prefer to take the time to research their candidates from the comfort of their home.
  - Vote by mail is an *additional* method Delawareans could use to vote. Unlike in other states that only use mail ballots, Delawarean voters could choose which method works best for them--early in person, in-person on election day, or by mail.

# Same-Day Registration

- **What is same-day registration?**
  - Same-day registration (SDR), allows any qualified resident of the state to register to vote and cast a ballot all on the same day — including on Election Day.
- **Why is it important?**
  - There is strong evidence that SDR increases voter participation. States that allow same-day registration experience, on average, a 5 percent increase in voter participation and consistently have the highest participation in the country. If Delaware implements same-day voter registration, estimates predict that we could expand voter turnout by over 22,000 people.
- **How many other states have Same Day Registration?**
  - For the 2022 elections, 21 states plus the District of Columbia will offer same-day registration (SDR), which allows any eligible resident of the state to register to vote and cast a ballot all on the same day.
- **HB 25: The Same Day Registration Bill**
  - This bill, sponsored by Representative Sherry Dorsey Walker, provides for registration through and including election day for the presidential primary, primary, special, and general elections whereas currently, the deadline is the fourth Saturday prior to the date of the election.

# Constituent Meetings 101

# Research Your Legislator

## Does your elected official generally support or oppose your issue?

- What is your lawmaker's voting record on the issue at stake or on similar issues? A good resource for voting records and issue ratings is Project Vote Smart: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org).
- If you are meeting about a specific piece of legislation, is your elected official is a co-sponsor?
- What other background information would be useful in crafting your messages and your “ask?” This may include your legislator's party affiliation, whether your lawmaker is a “champion” on certain issues, the demographics of their district, and whether they are up for re-election.
- Is there another piece of legislation you agree with that they are working on which you could use as an ice-breaker/rapport builder?

# Finalize your pre-meeting details

- If you are meeting with your elected official in a small coalition, it is important to determine prior to the meeting who your spokesperson or lead speaker will be, who will answer specific questions, who will take notes, and who will write a follow-up thank you letter.
- Regardless of whether you are meeting with your legislator by yourself or with a group, you should be clear about
  - Your Message
  - The resources you want to leave behind
  - Your ultimate “ask”
- It is also a good idea to practice what you want to say and how you will deal with difficult questions before the meeting takes place.



# During the meeting: Tips for Success

- Dress nicely and be on time. First impressions matter – do not let your appearance detract from your message or credibility.
- If virtual stay on camera and still be dressed nicely
- If you represent an organization, introduce yourself and tell your elected official or staff person the name and mission of your organization, where it is located and the size of its membership.
- If you are lobbying as an individual, be sure to introduce yourself as a constituent and to mention any family, social or business ties you may have with the legislator.
- Start with a supportive statement. For instance, if the legislator recently voted in favor of a related issue you care about, mention that. At a minimum, thank your elected official for taking the time to meet with you.

# During the Meeting: Tips for Success (cont)

- State clearly and concisely what issue you want to discuss, what your position is, and what action you want your elected official to take.
- Use simple, understandable terms and avoid acronyms.
- Offer a few supporting facts about why they should take your position.
- Stress how the issue will affect the member's district or state, if possible.
- Share a personal story or concrete examples that highlight your experience with the issue and why you care about it.
- Mention other organizations, influential people, government officials, and lawmakers that support your position.
- Be a good listener. After you make your pitch, allow the legislator to respond.

# During the Meeting: Tips for Success (cont)

- Be prepared to bring the conversation back to your message and ask if the lawmaker goes off tangent.
- Answer questions to the best of your ability. **If you do not know the answer, say so.** Offer to provide the information promptly in a follow-up email or letter.
- Do not forget to explicitly make your “ask.” Pose a direct, yes-or-no question to which the legislator can respond. An example would be “Can we count on you to co-sponsor the bill?” Be prepared for how you will respond to your member’s position. Have a plan to turn a “Yes” into a champion, an “Undecided” into a yes, and learn from the objections of a “No.”
- Give the lawmaker a “leave behind” fact sheet (1-2) pages that outlines your position, explains what the bill does (if applicable), and why they should support your viewpoint.
- Always thank your legislator for their time at the end of the meeting, even if they did not agree with your position.

# After the Meeting, Immediate Steps

- After the meeting, write down what happened and any information you learned about the member's position so you can share it with others and use it to develop your legislative advocacy strategy.
- Always follow up with a timely thank you letter. In the letter, reiterate your key points and any commitments the members made to you. Include all follow-up information you promised to provide.

# Share Your Story!

# Your Story:

- Why is HB 75 important to you?
- Did you vote by absentee ballot in 2020?
- Did you vote for your representative in 2020?
- How are your friends and family impacted?

# The ASK!