

MAY 2, 2008

**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT A. GLEASON, JR., CHAIRMAN OF THE
REPUBLICAN PARTY OF PENNSYLVANIA TO THE
PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE**

As Chairman of the Republican Party of Pennsylvania, I would like to thank the Pennsylvania House State Government Committee for the opportunity to submit a statement on the issue before this Committee on whether or not to allow seventeen year-olds to vote in the Primary, provided the individual will be eighteen years-old on or before the date of the General Election.

First, it is important to note that we have many Young Republicans, College Republicans and Teenage Republicans across the state that have been doing good work on behalf of our Party. I support the youth of our Party and we are excited and equally as impressed by the young leaders who are emerging in every region of Pennsylvania.

I would be remiss if I did not include the historical perspective that triggered the legal voting age to be lowered to eighteen. For years the United States

had a system where soldiers were old enough to be drafted into the military and, in some cases, died for their country without having the right to vote in elections that decided who the leaders would be to make those decisions.

With that in mind, I believe that we should respect the Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution that standardized the voting age to eighteen. I question whether or not moving the voting age will be held as Constitutional by the Supreme Court but in any case a change violates the spirit and tradition of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment.

I am confident that there may be many fifteen year-olds that would like to drive a car to a school dance a night before they get a permit and equally as many twenty year-olds that would like to purchase alcohol in preparation for their twenty-first birthday celebration, however; the Legislature, in its wisdom, has drawn these lines for all citizens and I believe that the consistency of our laws is an important principle that should be respected. These laws have been in place for generations, and I believe that this particular bill is a peripheral matter that should take a back seat to any number of issues that many would consider far more important.

In fact, our Party believes that this Committee's time would be better served taking steps to ensure fair elections by passing bills that could potentially prevent voter fraud. For example, this Committee has yet to act on House Bill 1118, which would require Pennsylvanians' to show photo identification before casting their ballot. According to a recent Associated Press report, legislation requiring voters to show some form of identification at the polls has already passed in twenty other states around the nation and the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled in the case *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board* that these requirements are a valid way to protect the integrity of our electoral process and our precious right to vote. ("Supreme Court upholds photo ID law for voters in Indiana," Associated Press, 4/28/08)

So in conclusion, I would again like to thank the State Government Committee for allowing me the opportunity to submit this statement on this issue. I truly believe that Pennsylvanians would be better served keeping the current laws in place.

Respectfully, I would ask that my comments be read aloud and inserted into the record. Thank you.