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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

MAIN CAPITOL  
ROOM 140  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

BUDGET HEARING  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2016  
1:35 P.M.

BEFORE:

- HONORABLE WILLIAM F. ADOLPH, JR.,  
Majority Chairman
- HONORABLE KAREN BOBACK
- HONORABLE JIM CHRISTIANA
- HONORABLE GARY DAY
- HONORABLE GEORGE DUNBAR
- HONORABLE KEITH GREINER
- HONORABLE SETH GROVE
- HONORABLE SUE HELM
- HONORABLE WARREN KAMPF
- HONORABLE FRED KELLER
- HONORABLE TOM KILLION
- HONORABLE JIM MARSHALL
- HONORABLE KURT MASSER
- HONORABLE DAVID MILLARD
- HONORABLE DUANE MILNE
- HONORABLE MARK MUSTIO
- HONORABLE MIKE PEIFER
- HONORABLE JEFFREY PYLE
- HONORABLE MARGUERITE QUINN
- HONORABLE CURT SONNEY
- HONORABLE JOSEPH MARKOSEK, Minority Chairman
- HONORABLE LESLIE ACOSTA
- HONORABLE MATTHEW BRADFORD
- HONORABLE TIM BRIGGS
- HONORABLE DONNA BULLOCK



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MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to reconvene the House Appropriations Committee. We have a very busy schedule this afternoon. We are going to be starting out with the Department of State, followed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. And we will finish the afternoon hearing from the attorney general.

It's certainly my pleasure to have with us today the secretary of the Department of State.

Mr. Secretary, if you have some brief opening remarks and introduce the staff that's at the table with you, we'd certainly appreciate it, and then we'll get right into some questions for you.

Thank you.

SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH:  
Mr. Secretary, please bring the microphone as close to you as possible.

And I was told -- we had some

1 interference earlier this morning, and, you  
2 know, whether you want to believe this or not,  
3 I'm not sure, but the IT people told me that  
4 if you have an iPhone too close to the mics,  
5 that's what causes the interference. So --

6 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Whatever  
8 that's worth. Thank you.

9 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you, again.

10 Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek,  
11 members of the House Appropriations Committee  
12 as well as the chairs from the distinguished  
13 committees of State Government and  
14 Professional Licensure, good afternoon. Thank  
15 you for the opportunity to appear before the  
16 committee to discuss the Department of State's  
17 2016-2017 budget.

18 Joining me today, to my right, is  
19 Marian Schneider, deputy secretary for  
20 Elections and Administration; to my left,  
21 Justin Cowan, director of the Bureau of  
22 Finance and Operations.

23 Mr. Chairman, I believe that ahead of  
24 this hearing, we submitted in writing my brief  
25 opening remarks, and even though they're

1           brief, in the interest of time, with your  
2           permission, may I suggest that those remarks  
3           be entered into the record, but I will not  
4           read them, so that we can proceed to your  
5           questions and expedite the process.

6                         Thank you, sir.

7                         MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you  
8           very much.

9                         Chairman Markosek for remarks.

10                        MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Thank  
11           you, Chairman.

12                        And, Secretary, welcome.

13                        SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you, sir.

14                        MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Lady and  
15           gentlemen, welcome.

16                        And I don't have any questions for  
17           you to get started. I'll let the members use  
18           my time. But I did want to welcome you, good  
19           to see you again and keep up your good work.

20                        SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you,  
21           Mr. Chairman. Always a pleasure to see you as  
22           well.

23                        MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Yes,  
24           Mr. Secretary. It is the custom for Chairman  
25           Markosek and I to invite the chairmen of the

1 standing House Committees, and your department  
2 covers two committees, so, it's certainly my  
3 pleasure to have with us today Chairwoman  
4 Julie Harhart, of the Professional Licensure  
5 Committee, the Republican chair, and Chairman  
6 Daryl Metcalfe, who's the Republican chair of  
7 the State Government Committee.

8 Ladies first, Chairwoman Julie  
9 Harhart.

10 REPRESENTATIVE HARHART: Thank you,  
11 Mr. Chair.

12 Thank you. Thank you all for being  
13 here.

14 In reviewing the 2016-'17 governor's  
15 executive budget book, it suggests that all  
16 fees for professional licensure boards are  
17 sufficient for the 2016-'17 budget year. It  
18 appears, though, that within your budget  
19 materials, for the professional licensure and  
20 augmentation account, I notice that expenses  
21 exceed revenues from 2014 to -- 2014-'15,  
22 through the next four planning years. And the  
23 actual ending balances drop from 33 million  
24 dollars in 2014-'15, to a projected 5 million  
25 at the end of the planning year -- at the

1 planning year four.

2 Why are these boards facing a  
3 structural deficit? And can you tell the  
4 committee how the boards plan on dealing with  
5 that deficit?

6 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you, Madam  
7 Chair.

8 So, there is not a deficit as such,  
9 but you do see and rightly point out that  
10 there is a decrease in terms of the amount  
11 from the augmented accounts. Part of that has  
12 to do with the implementation of the new  
13 system to track and to process licensures,  
14 initially application and renewals under the  
15 Bureau of Professional and Occupational  
16 Affairs.

17 As you're aware, the way that we used  
18 to handle applications, prior to my earlier  
19 tenure as a secretary in 2004, was much more  
20 paper driven, and then around the year  
21 2002-'3, we implemented L2K, License 2000,  
22 which has served us very well.

23 We are in the process of a complete  
24 revamping of the systems with a new solution  
25 that we call PALS, P-A-L-S, which is the



1 Pennsylvania license system, and that has some  
2 initial costs associated with the upgrade. We  
3 anticipate that the costs will be recouped in  
4 short order, partially because what we're  
5 looking to do in addition to providing  
6 efficiencies for the filing of new  
7 applications and renewals, but it's also to  
8 continue to enhance, for transparency  
9 purposes, for the public safety, some of the  
10 features that we have now. For example, the  
11 listing of disciplinary actions online, being  
12 able to do searches, be able to request a list  
13 of licensees and the other. So, some of those  
14 are related to costs associated to technology  
15 increases, but we do anticipate that it will  
16 be recovered in short order.

17 I will point out, though, there is  
18 one board out of the twenty-nine licensing  
19 boards that is, in fact, facing the potential  
20 of a very clear deficit, and that's the  
21 navigation commission, one of our twenty-nine  
22 licensing boards. And that case is because  
23 the navigation commission in Pennsylvania is a  
24 very small licensing community, currently only  
25 thirty-nine licensed pilots. And as you know,

1 those are the pilots that navigate the vessels  
2 from the mouth of the Delaware River up north.  
3 And that community is decreasing to thirty-  
4 eight.

5 We only charge 200 dollars a year per  
6 licensee, which gives only 7800, and the board  
7 has seen an increased number of investigation,  
8 and as such, which has increased the cost.  
9 So, at the last meeting of the navigation  
10 commission, as the chairman, I proposed and  
11 the board adopted a resolution to look into  
12 regulations to increase the amount for the  
13 board, and we're going to go through that  
14 process for regulatory.

15 So, that's the one board out of the  
16 twenty-nine that has a deficit. We had had  
17 deficits in the past, but the fees have been  
18 increased recently, and, therefore, we're in  
19 much better shape today.

20 REPRESENTATIVE HARHART: Do you see  
21 any other boards -- can you identify any other  
22 boards that may increase their fees in the  
23 future?

24 SECRETARY CORTES: So, yeah. We have  
25 one or two boards, and I'll be happy, for the

1 interest of the group, to provide you a  
2 follow-up listing of any of the boards. There  
3 are some boards that are looking at fee  
4 increases. Most have gone through those  
5 already. So, we're in pretty good shape in  
6 terms of what we expect to receive revenues  
7 verses expenses.

8 REPRESENTATIVE HARHART: Great.

9 And, Mr. Chairman, if I may ask one  
10 more question? Thank you.

11 Mr. Secretary, within your budget  
12 materials, it notes that additional expert  
13 witness costs are putting financial pressure  
14 on the Bureau of Professional and Occupational  
15 Affairs due to the additional scrutinies. The  
16 Department of State had requested 150,000  
17 dollars under the Professional and  
18 Occupational Affairs appropriations for expert  
19 witness cost, and the governor's recommended  
20 131,000 for the 2016-'17 budget year.

21 Is the 131,000 dollars sufficient to  
22 cover these witness costs in the aftermath of  
23 the Gosnell case? And can you provide an  
24 update on how the Gosnell case has impacted  
25 your department's operations in the recent

1 years?

2 SECRETARY CORTES: So, thank you,  
3 Madam Chair.

4 So, yes, the increase and the fees  
5 and the costs, rather, what we have requested  
6 in terms of professional witnesses and others  
7 to either participate in our hearings and  
8 others, we believe is adequate. It should  
9 cover the costs. Most of this comes as a  
10 result of the increased scrutiny not just from  
11 Gosnell but in general for the department,  
12 because, as you know, back in 2013-2014, we  
13 joined JNET, began using the Justice Network  
14 for the medical board, the osteopathic board,  
15 and the nursing board. And the nursing board  
16 is our largest board, out of almost a million  
17 licensees, they have over 300,000.

18 And with Justice Network, even though  
19 there's already reporting mechanisms in place,  
20 as you know, for the licensees, within JNET,  
21 what happens is, that if somebody is arrested  
22 or somebody is convicted, instead of waiting  
23 many times for the away licensee, him or  
24 herself, to report, we will get that  
25 information immediately. So, that triggers

1 the opening of a file for investigation, and  
2 that triggers the use of the additional cost.

3 With those, if there is a finding of  
4 sufficient evidence to proceed with an order  
5 to show cause, that's when, oftentimes, we  
6 have to employ the experts that will help us  
7 with the cases. But we anticipate that we're  
8 in good shape to be able to cover the current  
9 costs.

10 REPRESENTATIVE HARHART: So, 131,000,  
11 you see no problem with that?

12 SECRETARY CORTES: I think we're  
13 going to be in good shape, yes.

14 REPRESENTATIVE HARHART: You think  
15 you'll be in good shape. Okay.

16 SECRETARY CORTES: Yes.

17 REPRESENTATIVE HARHART: Thank you  
18 very much.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you  
21 very much.

22 Chairman Metcalfe.

23 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Thank you,  
24 Chairman Adolph.

25 Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being

1 with us today.

2 My first question is related to the  
3 waivers, the general government operations  
4 line waiver that was requested by the  
5 department from the 2014-'15 budget for  
6 967,531 dollars and 60 cents. My  
7 understanding is that, so far, the department  
8 spent 295,000 dollars of it.

9 This money that was requested, a  
10 waiver was requested for, so that was money  
11 that was in the budget prior to last year's  
12 budget.

13 SECRETARY CORTES: Correct.

14 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: That you  
15 asked for a waiver to be able to spend.

16 What was that money spent on? And  
17 what's the -- the remaining fund, which is the  
18 majority of it, what's the planned use for  
19 that money? And did your request for this  
20 year's budget note in that, in those  
21 calculations, a reduction in what you're  
22 asking for this year based on that pretty much  
23 million-dollar waiver?

24 SECRETARY CORTES: Excuse me.

25 Consulting with our director of Finance and

1 Operations.

2           So, as you know, generally speaking,  
3 the waivers for our department and any other  
4 comes when our expected expenditures that we  
5 have that we do not incur. A good amount of  
6 what we're talking here are expenditures that  
7 we have had -- that we had related to travel  
8 and other operational expenses that, over the  
9 last several months, did not take place, and,  
10 therefore, we asked for the waiver to be put  
11 in place.

12           At the moment, we think that what --  
13 we feel that what we have in terms of the use  
14 of the dollars, I think that we will spend it  
15 once we come back to a regular schedule for  
16 travel expenses related to those who come and  
17 visit with us in the department. Some of that  
18 is cost associated with, in addition to what  
19 we do in professional licensures, those  
20 related to matters related to elections and  
21 others.

22           So, I'm not sure if I'm being totally  
23 responsive to your question, but I'm happy to  
24 research further and give you a detailed  
25 answer afterwards.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: I would  
2 appreciate a follow-up and detailed answer to  
3 that series of subquestions that I had with  
4 the main question.

5                   SECRETARY CORTES: Sure.

6                   REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: You had  
7 briefed myself and Senator Folmer and some of  
8 our staff on something that the governor was  
9 going to bring up in the new budget, which was  
10 the Office of New Pennsylvanians.

11                   SECRETARY CORTES: Correct.

12                   REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: And as I  
13 reflected on the meeting that we had had and  
14 additional information, it still strikes me  
15 that we're proposing a new government office  
16 to hire four additional government employees  
17 when we had a budget impasse for six months,  
18 and the governor chose to line item veto many  
19 areas of the budget and reduce overall  
20 spending by 13 percent.

21                   But why does the department feel  
22 there's an immediate need for -- for this new  
23 office, given our current fiscal problems?  
24 And, really, the problem that you're trying to  
25 address with people leaving the state is more



1 based on employment opportunities here that  
2 aren't being created because of the spending  
3 of government and the tax situation and other  
4 issues, rather than just an office focused on  
5 trying to make people think they should come  
6 back here and have an easier time getting  
7 through licensing.

8 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you,  
9 Mr. Chairman.

10 You know, the office for -- our  
11 Office for New Pennsylvanians and other states  
12 that are facing similar challenges financially  
13 in terms of the population, and that's what I  
14 laid out to you and Senator Folmer in terms of  
15 the reason, first and foremost, what we're  
16 talking about is a new office that will work  
17 on attracting and retaining talent to the  
18 state of Pennsylvania.

19 As I presented to you and may be of  
20 knowledge to the other members of the  
21 committees, Pennsylvania has had a challenge  
22 since the 1950s, and that is that our  
23 population is not growing. So, long story  
24 short, even those states like Michigan, who  
25 are in financial -- very difficult financial

1 situation and lost population, made an  
2 investment in an office similar to this to  
3 attract talent to the state. And I agree with  
4 you, by the way, and Senator Folmer that  
5 certainly part of the reason we may not be  
6 seeing growth and folks are not coming or we  
7 have a brain drain and we're not getting the  
8 young people back has to do with employment.

9 So, obviously, others work in terms  
10 of upgrading employment opportunities, and I  
11 hope that would continue to happen, but our  
12 department has an opportunity to create an  
13 office that, based on return on investment in  
14 the state of New York and the state of  
15 Michigan, and the states of Massachusetts and  
16 other jurisdictions, had created the perfect  
17 environment to attract that talent so that we  
18 have a viable labor force that pays taxes and  
19 increases. And the numbers that we've seen in  
20 terms of return on investments on those  
21 offices has been quite significant.

22 So, we believe that is the right  
23 timing and the right opportunity for  
24 Pennsylvania to capitalize on what we have to  
25 offer, and with your work and the work of

1 other agencies in terms of creating the  
2 employment opportunities, I think we'll be  
3 well poised to be able to capitalize.

4 The investment in the office and the  
5 staff, we believe that can be recouped and,  
6 again, if our story is anything like the other  
7 states that I mentioned, it will be a success  
8 story for Pennsylvania.

9 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Now, in  
10 addition to the funding that you would need to  
11 start up this office, are there additional  
12 changes in statute that you would need for  
13 those four individuals to accomplish the  
14 mission that you've outlined for them in your  
15 plan to create this new office?

16 SECRETARY CORTES: We're --

17 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Or are the  
18 objectives that you're hoping to achieve  
19 already being worked on by various members of  
20 the department and other areas currently?

21 SECRETARY CORTES: Well, so, for the  
22 benefit of the entire committee, the office  
23 will be looking at a few things. Again, it's  
24 increasing and retaining talent for  
25 Pennsylvania, and not just from abroad but

1 we're talking about our family members who  
2 left the state, and we want them back. So, it  
3 is to brings new Pennsylvanians and keep them  
4 in Pennsylvania.

5 We're looking to do things such as  
6 assistance with professional licensure. We  
7 know that one of the challenges is that folks  
8 are licensed in other states and they come to  
9 Pennsylvania and it can be cumbersome to be  
10 able to obtain their license here. We want to  
11 help them with that in a more robust way.

12 We want to assist with  
13 entrepreneurial assistance. We know that not  
14 just immigrants but people in general, our  
15 economy is started by small businesses. So,  
16 the bottom line is the other work, like  
17 workforce development, English for speakers of  
18 other languages, that -- some are being  
19 provided by other agencies, some are being  
20 provided by the public sector, and this office  
21 will consolidate all those resources so that  
22 you have one-stop shop, and it's easier for  
23 people to find the services.

24 In terms of what the individuals will  
25 do, nothing there, in our legal review, would

1       require legislation, although we know that  
2       Senator Teplitz had introduced a bill, but  
3       ours is just slightly different, and ours  
4       places the department within the Department of  
5       State, as opposed to the office of Community  
6       and Economic Development.

7               So, the short answer is, no, we don't  
8       think there is additional legislation  
9       required, and, yes, we believe that the staff  
10      that will be hired will be able to do the job.  
11      And whether we're doing all that right now,  
12      no, we're not, and that's why we're asking for  
13      the additional staff.

14              REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: My final  
15      question, Mr. Chairman, would focus on the  
16      HAVA money.

17              We received 150 million dollars from  
18      the federal government to the Help America  
19      Vote Act from 2004 to 2007. Last year, the  
20      department reported 13 and a half million  
21      remaining in HAVA money, and that is expected  
22      to run out by 2018.

23              How does the department intend to use  
24      the remaining funds?

25              SECRETARY CORTES: So, the primary

1 cost with the current recurrent costs with  
2 HAVA and the investment of those dollars is  
3 through the SURE system, the Statewide Uniform  
4 Registry of Electors. It costs about 5.3  
5 million dollars to maintain and to run the  
6 SURE system. And the SURE system is not just  
7 voter registration, because, as you know, it's  
8 the total elections administration system for  
9 the entire state, including the sixty-seven  
10 counties.

11 Out of the 5.3 million dollars that  
12 is required to run HAVA, 4 million of those --  
13 1.4 million dollars are through HAVA dollars,  
14 and then we still do the grants for counties  
15 related to accessibility of polling places.  
16 And we have other costs related to the own  
17 operation of HAVA, including the payment of  
18 our staff that is -- that is used for -- to  
19 administer the HAVA requirements.

20 So, the reality is that we will run  
21 out of the money, which is almost depleted by  
22 the end of fiscal year '17-'18, maybe we  
23 stretch it one more year, but after that, what  
24 we will be looking for is that the costs  
25 associated with HAVA, which, by the way, most

1 aren't required just by the federal law but by  
2 our own Act 3 of 2002, that put the creation  
3 of the SURE system in the state, with all  
4 costs to the state, not to be passed to  
5 counties. So, in the future, we will need the  
6 state, through GGO allocation most likely, to  
7 cover all that cost.

8 So, in other words, the costs have  
9 been associated over the years with money to  
10 the counties for the purchase of the voting  
11 system and, more recently, is for money  
12 related to voter education, as well as the  
13 SURE system and accessibility.

14 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Has some of  
15 that money been utilized for the online voter  
16 registration?

17 SECRETARY CORTES: Yes. The  
18 system -- so, yes. In fact, the online voter  
19 registration system, which, in Pennsylvania,  
20 we were able to build for 217,000 dollars, now  
21 there's thirty states using online voter  
22 registration. Average price tag, a quarter of  
23 a million dollars, 250,000. The cost of OVR  
24 was paid -- the development of the system,  
25 with HAVA dollars, which is consistent with

1 the Help America Vote Act, in terms of voter  
2 registration.

3 The good thing is that we are already  
4 seeing and will continue, I believe, to see  
5 savings related to implementation of OVR.

6 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Now, in  
7 your testimony, you had mentioned that, on  
8 February 19th, less than six months after  
9 being in operation, the OVR online voter  
10 registration system logged its hundred  
11 thousandth user. I assume you probably  
12 have -- do you have the numbers on what is the  
13 cost savings per individual to the county, and  
14 is there any cost savings to the state when  
15 somebody is using online voter registration?

16 SECRETARY CORTES: Yes. So, we are  
17 yet -- we are still at the mark of roughly  
18 just a few days past six months. Usually to  
19 assess the benefits and -- because to see it  
20 all in a long term, it will take us about a  
21 year of data. But we can tell you, in  
22 implementing the online voter registration, in  
23 addition to the security and the -- and the  
24 easy access, what we saw from other states,  
25 and there's, again, before us, twenty-two



1 states that have used it, the average  
2 savings -- well, the savings will range  
3 between fifty cents per paper ballot all the  
4 way up to, in California, two dollars and  
5 thirty-four cents.

6 And so, we average a dollar fifty  
7 here in Pennsylvania, with a hundred thousand,  
8 we're well on our way to cover the costs. And  
9 where the savings come, and mostly to the  
10 counties, is that by having the registration  
11 be electronically as opposed to paper, the  
12 counties don't have to go over the  
13 labor-intensive data entries of forms, not  
14 only the hiring of additional staff closer to  
15 the crunch at the end of the period, but also  
16 the fact that many times there's a lot of  
17 communication that has to go back and forth  
18 relating to missing information and the like.

19 So, the counties are pretty happy,  
20 and we anticipate, again, in Pennsylvania,  
21 kind of about a dollar, a dollar fifty per  
22 ballot, we're going to be well on our way to  
23 do significant savings related to OVR.

24 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: That's  
25 based on other states' experiences. Was there

1 any calculation that had more formed before  
2 the system was put in place to actually try  
3 and project what the savings would be here in  
4 Pennsylvania for our counties?

5 SECRETARY CORTES: Yeah. So, we  
6 didn't have --

7 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Including  
8 the labor costs.

9 SECRETARY CORTES: Sure. So, we  
10 didn't have an actual figure that we had  
11 computed, but we know the figure, once we were  
12 able to see the numbers, to put into  
13 perspective, we know that what we're looking  
14 at is staff costs, reduce errors and the other  
15 benefits to the counties. So, the answer is,  
16 no, we don't have a number pegged yet, but,  
17 like I said, if our experience is anything  
18 like the other states, and put it at just an  
19 average, in Pennsylvania, like I said, we're  
20 looking at at least a dollar, very likely a  
21 dollar fifty per voter registration in terms  
22 of savings per registration.

23 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Thank you,  
24 Mr. Secretary.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,  
2 Chairman.

3 Representative Daley.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Thanks,  
5 Mr. Chairman.

6 And Secretary Cortes, it's good to  
7 see you again.

8 SECRETARY CORTES: Good to see you.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: I have two  
10 questions, and I hope that I can get them in  
11 in a reasonable period of time.

12 I was looking for an update on  
13 polling place accessibility. So, could you  
14 give us the information on the number of  
15 inaccessible polling places in Pennsylvania?  
16 Would it be possible to get a breakdown by  
17 county of what those numbers are? And also,  
18 just looking at your plan to reduce the number  
19 of inaccessible polling places across the  
20 state. And then, obviously, do you have any  
21 funding that is -- and I think I just heard  
22 you say that's one of the things you'll be  
23 using the HAVA funds for.

24 SECRETARY CORTES: Correct. Yes.

25 So, in terms of -- when we visited

1 last year, we talked about a little over 1600  
2 polling places in the state were not  
3 accessible. Of those 1600, 1580 or so were in  
4 Philadelphia. The majority of those have to  
5 do with parking. So, when you look at the  
6 polling places in Pennsylvania, we have 9,800,  
7 so we have close to 10,000. Every year, the  
8 counties have to go through an assessment of  
9 each polling place using a form that we  
10 provide with twenty-four requirements. If you  
11 miss one requirement, it's inaccessible. So,  
12 it's all or nothing. And the -- from those  
13 reports, mostly what comes back has to do with  
14 the parking.

15 Philadelphia resubmitted their  
16 numbers this year. They provided numbers at  
17 the end of the fiscal year, so we got them on  
18 June 30th. They resubmitted a number, revised  
19 it, in December. And they're telling us that  
20 out of the 1500, they've been able to reduce  
21 that number another -- by -- down from 1580  
22 down to only 125. And the reason for that,  
23 though, is because Philadelphia, for the most  
24 part, recalculated the form or used a  
25 different methodology, and basically excluded

1 those that had only the parking space issue.  
2 Because other than that, the place is fully  
3 accessible, but you don't have the parking.

4 So, while we can appreciate what  
5 Philadelphia is trying to do, the reality is  
6 we're looking at and are in conversation with  
7 Philadelphia to actually see the spreadsheet  
8 and validate it. Because, if you do not have  
9 a place that is 100 percent accessible, if you  
10 don't have it with every requirement,  
11 including parking, it's technically not  
12 accessible, and that has repercussions related  
13 to whether you can obtain, you know, an  
14 alternate ballot, because -- you know, because  
15 you're over 65 and cannot get to the polling  
16 place.

17 So, yes, we are using some funds for  
18 the counties. In fact, we were able to reduce  
19 the number in the aggregate about a hundred,  
20 and those have to do with ramps. They have  
21 to do with some other accessibility. And we  
22 continue to work with Philadelphia. But the  
23 challenge is mostly parking in areas that you  
24 just don't have it.

25 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Okay. Thank

1 you. That's really helpful.

2 So, the other thing I wanted to ask  
3 about was, we've heard a lot recently that  
4 the -- that the voting machines are reaching  
5 an age where they're going to need to be  
6 replaced. And I'm just wondering, is there a  
7 plan moved forward, or is that actually going  
8 to be a county expense? Or -- so, is there a  
9 statewide plan, and does it roll out to the  
10 counties? How does that work?

11 SECRETARY CORTES: Yes. So, the  
12 question about the useful life of our voting  
13 system is one of much discussion and -- at the  
14 federal level, and the group such as the  
15 Brennan Center for Justice have noted that the  
16 voting system that we purchased in  
17 Pennsylvania and other states with the HAVA  
18 dollars back in the early 2000s are now at,  
19 you know, twelve, thirteen years age systems,  
20 and those systems will soon live their useful  
21 life.

22 In Pennsylvania, we have talked to  
23 all the counties and have done an assessment  
24 not only where they are in the system but  
25 maintenance, what spare parts, and we believe

1 that all the counties are in good shape to  
2 hold the elections this year, and, in fact,  
3 many will be able to hold elections for many  
4 years to come.

5 The system is very useful. If you  
6 have maintained it properly and if you have  
7 the parts, and the vendors in Pennsylvania  
8 have indicated that they all have the spare  
9 parts.

10 We know that there are counties such  
11 as Philadelphia, Montgomery, that would like  
12 to change their system, and for that, the  
13 counties are already allocating or said that  
14 they will allocate their own funding.

15 Pennsylvania, at the state level,  
16 historically, has never paid for voting  
17 systems. And moneys that were given to the  
18 county, close to a hundred million dollars of  
19 what we received from HAVA, went to the  
20 counties. You know, it was federal dollars,  
21 and we were the pass through.

22 I know that if we were to replace our  
23 voting systems in Pennsylvania today, it could  
24 be up to a hundred million dollars, although  
25 technology is improving and the cost is coming

1 down.

2 So, long story short, I believe the  
3 systems -- the counties are fine now, but what  
4 we're doing for our part, aside from money, is  
5 to examine voting systems, and we're doing  
6 that on a regular basis, and we're looking at  
7 our protocols so that we can have more choice  
8 that the counties can use.

9 In the end, at the moment, it will be  
10 county's expenditure, and not otherwise  
11 something for the esteemed body to consider  
12 and others, if, in fact, at some point in time  
13 we want to assist the counties with the  
14 replacement of that equipment.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Okay.

16 SECRETARY CORTES: When times come  
17 due.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Good. Thank  
19 you.

20 SECRETARY CORTES: You're welcome.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

22 At this time, I'd like to acknowledge  
23 the presence of Representatives Phillips Hill,  
24 Dush, and Gabler. Thank you for joining us.

25 Representative Keith Greiner has the



1 next question.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Thanks,  
3 Mr. Chairman.

4 Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary.

5 SECRETARY CORTES: Good to see,  
6 Representative.

7 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Good to have  
8 you here.

9 I want to shift gears a little bit  
10 and talk about lobbying. It's been brought to  
11 my attention that some lobbyists are  
12 experiencing some trouble with the operation  
13 of the new disclosure site, the current one.  
14 And these issues include either not being  
15 listed as a lobbyist for an organization, even  
16 after they've filled out all the appropriate  
17 paperwork, or they're still being listed as  
18 the lobbyist for an organization that they are  
19 no longer affiliated with.

20 And I didn't know whether you were  
21 aware that there were bugs in the system, and  
22 just wanted to, you know, wanted to bring that  
23 up and see whether you're trying to make  
24 efforts to correct that. And I just wanted a  
25 another quick follow-up after that.

1                   SECRETARY CORTES: Sure. So, yes.  
2                   And just recently, I spoke to the Pennsylvania  
3                   association, the lobbyist community and was  
4                   their guest speaker in their monthly meeting.  
5                   And the good thing is that, since the  
6                   implementation going back to 2007 of the  
7                   lobbying disclosure law and the system itself,  
8                   we have continued to do ongoing improvements,  
9                   and now we have an agile system for technology  
10                  improvement, where we can make changes every  
11                  month. And the folks in the lobbying  
12                  community are at the table. But the system is  
13                  not perfect, but it's improving quite fast.

14                  And the short answer is that,  
15                  especially now that we have the increase in  
16                  the fees, we have the resources to make some  
17                  of those changes, our part of the improvement  
18                  process in terms of the technology with the  
19                  system.

20                  REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: I appreciate  
21                  that. I have a fellow colleague from  
22                  Lancaster County who's working on -- we're  
23                  concerned about lobbying, and he has a bill  
24                  that would have increased the penalties for  
25                  those who, you know, don't follow the proper

1 procedures. And, of course, if we're working  
2 on legislation like that, we'd be concerned  
3 about, you know, wrongly penalizing somebody  
4 who's tried to do the right thing. And -- so  
5 I appreciate that, you know, that it's being  
6 looked at, that, you know, it sounds like you  
7 made great leaps, but it also sounds like that  
8 there's still some room for improvement.

9 I just would encourage that we  
10 continue to work towards that, because I -- I  
11 know that we, as legislators, try to be  
12 transparent, and I know we hope lobbyists are  
13 too, and I think the general public expects  
14 that out of us. And I just wanted to bring  
15 that to your attention.

16 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Just one  
18 quick thing, the lobbying disclosure line, if  
19 you can just talk about the budget a little  
20 bit. Maybe you can just talk to me a little  
21 bit about funding. It appears that it's been  
22 cut, you know, and in light of trying to  
23 improve this, I just want to be sure I'm  
24 mixing apples with apples. I do know that  
25 might be some moneys outside the general fund

1 that are also used to help with this area, but  
2 maybe you can let me know, you know, looking  
3 at the budget, looks like it was cut. Maybe  
4 you can just fill me in on the funding for  
5 that, too.

6 SECRETARY CORTES: So, in terms of  
7 lobbying disclosure, just very quickly, as you  
8 know, the fee increased for -- the biannual  
9 fee was increased from two hundred to three  
10 hundred. In looking at the amount of the --  
11 what happens is, the reason you saw state  
12 funds more in terms of GGO and now you see  
13 more of being used in restricted accounts, is  
14 that now that we have the higher fee, we have  
15 additional resources.

16 So, we're just shifting the cost,  
17 instead of being the state to the lobbying  
18 community, which is the right thing. The law,  
19 the way that was drafted, gave a very small, a  
20 hundred dollars every two years, and we  
21 quickly found out in terms of developing the  
22 systems and maintaining the system is that  
23 wasn't adequate. But because it is about  
24 transparencies, about providing an opportunity  
25 for the public to see who is advocating to

1 government, we subsidize, so to speak, the  
2 cost, operational cost, with GGO dollars.

3 Now, as we have more revenue coming  
4 in from the increased fees, we're able to  
5 shift those dollars. So, in the end, the  
6 system -- we have the resources to work the  
7 system, it's just a shifting of state funds to  
8 restricted funds now that there are more.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: That's what  
10 I thought. I just want to clarify that.  
11 So --

12 SECRETARY CORTES: And if I may very  
13 quickly, in our department, we're very proud,  
14 whether it's lobbying disclosure, anything at  
15 all, campaign finance, if anyone ever has an  
16 issue with the department where we think that  
17 we wronged you in any way, we didn't do  
18 something right, something doesn't look good  
19 in the computer, we're very eager to hear from  
20 anyone who has a concern. And I can tell you,  
21 almost a hundred percent of the time, if  
22 there's an issue that is valid, we handle it  
23 right away. And we're big on customer  
24 satisfaction and customer care.

25 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Thank you,

1 Mr. Secretary.

2 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you,  
3 Representative.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Thank you,  
5 Chairman.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,  
7 Representative.

8 Representative Bullock.

9 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,  
10 Chairman.

11 Good afternoon, Secretary Cortes.

12 It's definitely an honor to have you with us  
13 this afternoon.

14 As a private attorney, I worked with  
15 a lot of charitable organizations, and that  
16 was actually my focus of my practice, was to  
17 form and advise those nonprofit organizations  
18 in our commonwealth. And what many people may  
19 not know is your department actually regulates  
20 and registers those organizations and makes  
21 sure that they're doing the right thing.

22 A lot of our charitable organizations  
23 are doing just that, doing a lot of great  
24 things that improves the lives of  
25 Pennsylvanians across the commonwealth.

1           However, we know that some of them may engage  
2           in unscrupulous activities and maybe engage in  
3           activity that is fraudulent and otherwise  
4           victimizes our citizens.

5                        Could you tell me some of the  
6           activities that your department does in the  
7           Bureau of Corporations and Charitable  
8           Organizations, specifically around charitable  
9           solicitation of giving and how -- what steps  
10          are you taking to protect the public and if  
11          you have any statistics on that?

12                       SECRETARY CORTES: I do. And --  
13          and -- yes. So, the department -- and we have  
14          two bureaus that work on the matters of  
15          charities, and charities and solicitation and  
16          making sure that folks don't prey on the  
17          generosity of Pennsylvanians as a top  
18          priority.

19                       As you may know, in the month of  
20          December, we dedicated pretty much the entire  
21          month to do education around solicitation and  
22          giving, always giving the basics and -- don't  
23          give on the phone if you don't know the group,  
24          check with our website to make sure that it is  
25          a registered charity and the like.

1           So, what -- we have the Bureau of  
2 Corporation and Charitable organizations that  
3 oversees the administrative part, making sure  
4 that the organizations are properly  
5 registered. And most of the complaints that  
6 we hear have -- that we get are related to  
7 charities that are not registered or those who  
8 misused the funds and the like.

9           The Bureau of Corporations and  
10 Charitable Organizations does the  
11 administrative side, but the bureau also works  
12 with the Bureau of Enforcement and  
13 Investigation, which is our largest bureau,  
14 and it's related to all issues of  
15 investigation and, in the case of charities,  
16 even audits.

17           So, what we have seen over the years  
18 as of -- as of 2015, we had -- we opened two  
19 hundred four cases and closed two hundred  
20 thirty-one, so we're actively and very  
21 aggressively prosecuting any type of  
22 violations to the Pennsylvania solicitation  
23 act, solicitation of funds act. And that  
24 could come in the way of cease and desist  
25 orders. It could be adjudications after



1       hearings and due process and they all have due  
2       process or filings, again, cease and desist  
3       mostly.

4               We had, again, two hundred thirty-one  
5       cases. Those cases are handled by the  
6       investigators of the Bureau of Enforcement and  
7       Investigation. And we have -- the group is  
8       very enthusiastic about, you know, doing their  
9       job. So much so that, just three weeks ago, I  
10      announced the -- the assignment of a full-time  
11      prosecutor just for charities.

12             What we have been doing over the  
13      years is that we supplement the actual  
14      prosecution after investigations with other  
15      attorneys that work in BEI or BPOA. But we  
16      are now assigning a full-time person just to  
17      prosecute cases of charities.

18             REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you  
19      for that information.

20             I have another line of questioning.

21             SECRETARY CORTES: Sure.

22             REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: I'm  
23      encouraged by the representation of the table  
24      before me today, but I would like to know what  
25      does your workforce look like throughout the

1 rank and file of your department? And if you  
2 could share with me the numbers of women and  
3 minority employees, and if you could share any  
4 additional information in regards to your  
5 workforce.

6 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you. Thank  
7 you so very much.

8 So, the department has a total  
9 complement of five hundred one staff, and I'll  
10 share just the percentages, and I'll give you  
11 kind of -- paint a picture where we were at  
12 the end of 2014, where we were at the end of  
13 last year, last year being my tenure, being in  
14 2015.

15 We have seen an increase in terms of  
16 minorities from 4 percent to 11 percent. And  
17 that's across the board. In fact, it's  
18 mostly, in terms of minorities and women,  
19 mostly represented in the executive senior  
20 staff. We have three deputy secretaries. Of  
21 the three deputy secretaries, one is a woman,  
22 sitting to my right, Marian Schneider. But  
23 one of our other deputies that oversees  
24 regulatory matters, African American male,  
25 Peter Speaks.

1           In terms of our legal counsel,  
2           everyone with the exception of the chief  
3           counsel are women, and that includes the chief  
4           hearing examiner, that includes the deputy for  
5           prosecutions, for counsel, for election and  
6           administration.

7           In our executive staff, our director  
8           of policy and deputy director of policy are  
9           African American, and they're one a man, one a  
10          woman. In our Office of Communications, the  
11          press director is an Latina woman. And the  
12          new director of digital -- the digital  
13          director is an African American woman.

14          So, across the board, down the line,  
15          are deputy commissioner of the BPOA, Kathy  
16          Waters, African American woman. So, I'm very  
17          pleased, and I'm happy to give you very  
18          specific numbers for you and the committee to  
19          have. But I think we are a good example of  
20          diversity, and we are doing diversity right at  
21          the top so that it trickles all the way down.

22                 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you  
23                 for sharing. I'm very much encouraged by that  
24                 and that it's not just numbers at the bottom  
25                 but numbers at the top executive levels as

1 well.

2 I'm familiar with Ms. Schneider, and  
3 I'm very excited to see her at her post.

4 And I wonder if that is reflective,  
5 if you have any contracts, if you do  
6 subcontracting in your department, do you try  
7 to also have diversity in that respect as  
8 well?

9 SECRETARY CORTES: We do. We do.  
10 There's a significant amount of diversity  
11 among our contracted staff. The company that  
12 oversees most of our technology projects --  
13 that helps us, rather, with our technology  
14 projects is a company called Acclaim, owned by  
15 a minority person, minority business  
16 enterprise.

17 We also have the person that provides  
18 the services for transcribing for the Bureau  
19 of Professional and Occupational Affairs is  
20 Thias Transcribing (phonetic), owned by a  
21 Latina woman.

22 And across the board, a good amount  
23 of our contracts, if not the majority, are  
24 held by either women or minority-owned  
25 businesses.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,  
2                   Secretary Cortes, for your commitment to  
3                   diversity both in the workforce and in your  
4                   contracting.

5                   If you could share the additional  
6                   details with both of our chairmen, I would  
7                   really appreciate it.

8                   SECRETARY CORTES: I will do that.

9                   REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you.

10                  SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you.

11                  MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

12                  Representative Curt Sonney.

13                  REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Thank you,  
14                  Mr. Chairman.

15                  Secretary, good to see you.

16                  SECRETARY CORTES: Good to see you as  
17                  well, Representative. How are you?

18                  REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Good. How  
19                  are you?

20                  SECRETARY CORTES: Excellent.

21                  REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: I want to  
22                  circle back a little bit to the licensing  
23                  boards. And you know, as you're well aware,  
24                  that every legislative session there's always  
25                  a push to expand those boards. So, what

1 would -- is there any direct cost to your  
2 department whenever a new licensing board is  
3 brought in?

4 SECRETARY CORTES: So, yes. So, any  
5 time you create a board, and we go through a  
6 process, a very formal process, of what we  
7 call sunshine review for any requests, and  
8 sometimes those requests come from groups of  
9 professional groups and others, we do a review  
10 of the cost. And that's based on how many --  
11 how many members will be or how many  
12 professionals we will be licensing, and then  
13 there's operational costs related to the --  
14 establishing the board administratively, not  
15 just with the staff but review, working on  
16 regulations that might accompany a bill to  
17 establish a process.

18 So, it varies, but there's certainly  
19 costs associated with creation of any board,  
20 and that probably explains part of the reason  
21 why you don't see too many boards created. We  
22 have a total of twenty-nine, but certainly if  
23 we see a board that is created by legislation,  
24 because you see it as required, we work -- you  
25 know, we would work with the licensing

1 community and certainly with the general  
2 assembly to look into the cost associated for  
3 payment.

4 But also sometimes what happens, too,  
5 is when you initiate a board, you don't go  
6 elect -- the boards, by the way, are funded  
7 through licensing fees, and eventually you  
8 have penalties and the like, but most of the  
9 boards are created with moneys that are  
10 borrowed through the augmentation -- the  
11 professional licensure augmentation fund, and  
12 those funds have to be paid back.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: So, really  
14 what you're saying is you try to assist them  
15 in establishing what the fee should be so that  
16 it can fund its own operations.

17 SECRETARY CORTES: Absolutely. So,  
18 the idea is -- is that all boards are -- are  
19 self-sufficient in terms of their funding, so  
20 that the funding is directly -- you know, the  
21 fees are directly related to the dollars  
22 required to operate the board efficiently.  
23 And that's personnel. That's technology.  
24 That's all the other operational costs related  
25 to any board.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY:  Are those  
2                   only within those boards, or, collectively, is  
3                   some of that revenue to actually fund some of  
4                   your employees associated with overseeing?

5                   SECRETARY CORTES:  Well, in terms --  
6                   if you're asking where the money comes from,  
7                   as far as the Bureau of Professional and  
8                   Occupational Affairs, everybody's license,  
9                   those are restricted accounts, funded through  
10                  the boards themselves and their fees.

11                  REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY:  Are any of  
12                  those dollars used directly for employees  
13                  through State that have to monitor their  
14                  operations?

15                  SECRETARY CORTES:  Sure.  Sure.  So,  
16                  so I noted, so the cost associated with any  
17                  board, you have both -- and the -- you're  
18                  looking at two expenses, personnel and  
19                  operational.  Personnel is the people, so that  
20                  will be wage, salaries, benefits.  And then  
21                  the operational is everything from the -- the  
22                  website, the meetings, the copying, anything  
23                  related to the actual operation, the physical  
24                  space that you might need.

25                  REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY:  So,



1 collectively, they fund the entire operation;  
2 correct?

3 SECRETARY CORTES: Correct, yes.

4 Yes. So, in theory, yes.

5 So, every once in a while -- so you  
6 may get to the case I was just talking about,  
7 the navigation commission. The navigation  
8 commission, at some point in time, may run  
9 into a deficit until the fee is increased.  
10 It's provided in law, and it's anticipated  
11 that that may become the case from time to  
12 time, and that's why you have the professional  
13 licensure augmentation account that would  
14 allow you to borrow that money and as you then  
15 take the necessary steps to address a  
16 shortfall, then that amount is paid back.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: And are you a  
18 de facto member on all boards?

19 SECRETARY CORTES: I am not. I am a  
20 member of only two out of the twenty-nine  
21 licensing boards. The state board -- the  
22 state commission -- the state real estate  
23 commission and the navigation commission, of  
24 which I'm the chairman.

25 The commissioner of the Bureau of

1 Professional and Occupational Affairs is a  
2 member of the other twenty-seven licensing  
3 boards.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Thank you.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,  
7 Representative.

8 Representative Dean.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Thank you,  
10 Mr. Chairman.

11 Good afternoon, Secretary Cortes and  
12 colleagues. Thanks for being here.

13 I have two quick areas of questions.  
14 And I promised a seventeen-year-old senior at  
15 Abington High School, who came to visit me on  
16 Friday, that I would pitch this idea to you,  
17 his idea. He's a very engaged young man. And  
18 he said, "I'm seventeen for the primary. I  
19 will be eighteen in the general election."  
20 Any initiatives in Pennsylvania to allow  
21 primary voting for those who would be eighteen  
22 at the time of the general election?

23 SECRETARY CORTES: Nothing, nothing  
24 that we have in the books right now, but there  
25 have been proposed legislation in the years

1 past to, you know -- certainly, the  
2 registration part, you can register if you're  
3 going to be eighteen before the next election.

4 If the question is precisely to allow  
5 a seventeen-year-old, seventeen in the primary  
6 but will be eighteen in the general, to vote,  
7 not something that we're contemplating right  
8 now. But I tell you, as the governor likes to  
9 say, everything's on the table. And I think  
10 that we need to find a way to engage  
11 particularly the voters who we've seen,  
12 historically the eighteen to twenty-fours seem  
13 more disengaged maybe because they're worried  
14 about other things and are not yet thinking  
15 about their civic engagement or  
16 responsibility. And I think it's worth  
17 considering. I think it's a good idea.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: I thought it  
19 was terrific that somebody that age was  
20 thinking along those lines.

21 And I know with online voter  
22 registration, you reported, I think, nearly a  
23 hundred thousand -- well, I think 60 percent  
24 of which are new registrations, but basically  
25 a hundred thousand folks in Pennsylvania took

1 advantage of the online. As you said,  
2 eventually it's going to be a cost saver.

3 Do you have any other initiatives  
4 regarding elections, the process, or voter  
5 registration that you would like to see either  
6 something that you can do within your  
7 department or something statutorily that we  
8 should be thinking about?

9 SECRETARY CORTES: And I think -- I  
10 thank you kindly for that.

11 So, yes, we are always thinking about  
12 civic engagement, civic -- just getting folks  
13 and everyone, but particularly the young  
14 voters, to become part of the process, because  
15 as you know, once you start, you continue.

16 And so, we are in the process of  
17 launching an initiative which we call -- we're  
18 going to call it Civics 101, but it's going to  
19 be everyone votes in Pennsylvania, where we're  
20 going to work closely with educators at the  
21 high school level, but also colleges, to take  
22 the message of why voting is so important.  
23 It's not just a right; it's a responsibility.

24 We are -- so mostly it's based on  
25 education at this point in time. The earlier

1       legislation in terms of, as you mentioned,  
2       that we would love to entertain, and we would  
3       be very, very happy to give you more that we  
4       can do.

5               In the short term, we would love to  
6       see, and we've been asking for this for years  
7       now, is no excuse absentee voting, just in  
8       general. I think that's just an easy start,  
9       no excuse absentee voting.

10              And then there's an issue that we  
11       have right now that -- this is actually the  
12       voting itself, that is the deadlines for the  
13       absentee ballots, and that has to do with the  
14       U.S. Postal Service, just because the system,  
15       you know, the postal service is bankrupt and  
16       they're not getting -- they're not just  
17       getting the mail back to the counties as  
18       quickly as possible.

19              So, they're all initiatives that  
20       we'll be happy to discuss with you and the  
21       committee. We're always thinking about how we  
22       can improve the process and get every eligible  
23       voter not just registered but give them a  
24       meaningful opportunity to participate in the  
25       franchise.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Do you know  
2 what percentage of Pennsylvanians are  
3 registered to vote?

4                   SECRETARY CORTES: So, the current  
5 numbers -- so, Pennsylvania has 12.8 million  
6 residents, of which, if you -- Pew Charitable  
7 Trusts had given us figures that suggest that  
8 the number of eligible voters could be as high  
9 as 10 million. We have registered at the  
10 moment 8.2 million. So, we have potentially,  
11 you know, could be up to 2 million  
12 Pennsylvanians that are eligible to vote and  
13 are not yet registered.

14                   And so, yes, so about 80 percent.  
15 We're talking about 8 million out of the  
16 potential 10 million.

17                   REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Thank you very  
18 much.

19                   SECRETARY CORTES: You're welcome.

20                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

21                   I just want to make an announcement  
22 that we have pushed back the DCNR hearing till  
23 2:45. Okay? In case someone is waiting for  
24 that hearing.

25                   Representative Sue Helm.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you,  
2 Mr. Chairman.

3                   And, Secretary Cortes, always great  
4 to see you.

5                   SECRETARY CORTES: Always great to  
6 see you, Representative Helm.

7                   REPRESENTATIVE HELM: We discussed  
8 the cost of special elections. Within the  
9 governor's 2016-'17 budget, the governor  
10 included 400,000 dollars for the county  
11 election expenses executive authorization.  
12 With the number of special elections that have  
13 occurred over the past fiscal year, those that  
14 will occur over the next few weeks, will the  
15 400,000 estimate cover all of these expenses?  
16 Like, we have three special elections, I know,  
17 coming up on March 15th. We have House  
18 District 57, which is Westmoreland County,  
19 House District 192, House District 200, in the  
20 Philadelphia area.

21                   I was just wondering, what is the  
22 average cost or reimbursement to the counties  
23 for special elections for a member of the  
24 general assembly?

25                   SECRETARY CORTES: So, the cost

1 associated for the counties, and we've run the  
2 numbers because we had looked at every special  
3 election over the last ten years, it runs a  
4 gamut, in the low amount, 100,000, at least  
5 100,000, 125,000 in some instances.

6 Particularly for Senate races, it could be as  
7 high as over 200,000 dollars. So, special  
8 elections are expensive, are very expensive.

9 The 400,000 so far has been  
10 sufficient. It's an executive appropriation,  
11 so that if we needed more money, we can go and  
12 ask for the additional dollars. But they're  
13 expensive. You know, for my money, I would  
14 rather have them when you have the general  
15 election already taking place or the primary.  
16 The -- so, we might be okay.

17 The other thing -- and I don't want  
18 to say this out loud -- not all the counties  
19 come back to us and ask us for the money back.  
20 So, you know, if that doesn't happen, that's  
21 great. In other words, the counties are  
22 entitled to get their money back. Some of the  
23 counties run their special elections and don't  
24 come back to us and say, "Give me my money."  
25 And that's fine. I don't go back to them and



1 tell them, "You have to take it."

2 So, yeah, it depends. It depends  
3 where the election is, and also, like, how  
4 many you have. So, it's a big concern for us,  
5 the more you have, certainly very expensive.

6 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: How long do the  
7 counties have to submit their expenses?

8 SECRETARY CORTES: I don't think that  
9 there is a deadline. They can come anytime.  
10 That's why I was hesitant to say that, and  
11 that's why I didn't name the county, but they  
12 know who they are.

13 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: I would think  
14 they would submit their expense, but whatever  
15 they want to do.

16 SECRETARY CORTES: No, absolutely.  
17 Yeah. But -- so the short answer, it costs  
18 anywhere between, you take the very low end  
19 100,000 to up to 250,000 dollars to run a  
20 special election.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: All right.  
22 Thank you.

23 SECRETARY CORTES: You're welcome.  
24 Thank you.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: I just

1 want to remind the secretary these hearings  
2 are televised.

3 SECRETARY CORTES: I know. I know.  
4 As soon as those words came out of my mouth,  
5 I'm already regretting that.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: County  
7 controllers are listening.

8 Representative Acosta.

9 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Thank you,  
10 Chairman.

11 Secretary Cortes, it's a pleasure to  
12 see you, and thank you for being here today.

13 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you.

14 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: I want to --  
15 I want to revert back to this issue of the New  
16 Pennsylvanian. You know, there's been a lot  
17 of discussion, and there's this big, I  
18 believe, attack against the immigrant  
19 community across the commonwealth of  
20 Pennsylvania. And, you know, I know the  
21 purpose of this program is to attract, to  
22 retain, and to integrate new Americans into  
23 the commonwealth. That's the goal of this  
24 entire program.

25 And I just want to throw out some

1 facts, so people can be clear of the  
2 contributions, enormous contributions, that  
3 immigrant communities make in the commonwealth  
4 of Pennsylvania. In fact, the population in  
5 Pennsylvania is 6 percent of the total  
6 population, so out of 12, 13 million, 6  
7 percent of that are immigrants that live here  
8 in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. 9.7  
9 percent of the businesses in the commonwealth  
10 come from immigrants that have settled in  
11 Pennsylvania.

12 The purchasing power of Asians and  
13 Latinos is 36 billion dollars. 10 percent of  
14 the economic output in the city of  
15 Philadelphia comes from the immigrant  
16 community.

17 Forty-six out of the sixty-seven  
18 counties have witnessed an immigrant growth.  
19 This is not going to go away. I don't care  
20 even if Donald Trump is going to get elected  
21 into office in November, immigrant community  
22 is here to stay and it's not going to go away.

23 So, to say that, would it be safe to  
24 say that 877,000, which is what the increase  
25 that your office is requesting, is a small

1 price to pay in exchange for the enormous  
2 economic contributions that the immigrant  
3 community is making to the commonwealth of  
4 Pennsylvania? Can you answer that?

5 SECRETARY CORTES: I -- and thank  
6 you, Representative Acosta.

7 So, yeah, I would -- I would concur  
8 with that in the general sense of just what  
9 everybody contributes. I do want to clarify  
10 that this office, while it certainly has a  
11 component that very much speaks to  
12 nonAmericans, no individuals that are not  
13 within the borders already, will --  
14 certainly the immigrant community will be  
15 impacted and positively impacted the  
16 initiatives for everybody.

17 So, no -- but to go to your point,  
18 yes, absolutely. In fact, that's what other  
19 states have seen in New York, Michigan.  
20 Michigan's growth has been in communities that  
21 are nontraditionally the white, Caucasian  
22 community, and that's what our population has  
23 been in Pennsylvania over the years.

24 The reason why -- you know, and as I  
25 talk to other members of this committee and

1 other legislators, the challenge in  
2 Pennsylvania is that while we're not losing  
3 population, we're stagnant. And the only  
4 reason we are not going in the -- actually  
5 have less is because of the communities of  
6 color that are growing, but that's, again, not  
7 all foreign born.

8 I think that the investment is a good  
9 investment. I think it's going to pay  
10 dividends. I do make the -- make the reminder  
11 that while immigrants are an important  
12 component of the Office for New  
13 Pennsylvanians, the reason we call it Office  
14 for New Pennsylvanians is because it's  
15 intended to cover a broader scope of  
16 individuals. In other words, to your point,  
17 we capitalize on the growth and the  
18 contribution, numerous, of the immigrant  
19 community, and then on top of that we have the  
20 benefit of other already nonPennsylvanians  
21 that we want to bring back to our state, some  
22 of them, as I mentioned before, our own  
23 relatives, that also can contribute greatly.

24 So, to your point, your point is well  
25 taken.

1           REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA:  So, the next  
2           line of questioning is, so you're going to  
3           hire four people in this program; is that  
4           correct?

5           SECRETARY CORTES:  That's the  
6           proposal, yes.

7           REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA:  How will  
8           those efforts be distributed across the  
9           commonwealth?

10          SECRETARY CORTES:  Excellent  
11          question.  By the way, you know, as we look at  
12          four people and what we're trying to do and  
13          the resources, we -- you know, maybe -- I  
14          thought, you know, that's a fair number to  
15          ask.  We had a meeting with the Pew Charitable  
16          Trust, and the Pew, very credible group that  
17          you know, and looked at what we had proposed  
18          to do with this office, which, again, is  
19          education, economic development, civic  
20          engagement, and all those components and we  
21          told them -- and they know our population  
22          statistics, and we said, We want to do it with  
23          four people:  a director, deputy director, a  
24          lawyer not -- not to do -- we're not going to  
25          do with this office legal counsel on

1 immigration matters. That's one thing, it's  
2 not intended to do the deferred actions.  
3 We're not getting into the legal elements.  
4 Other groups can do that, and we may do a  
5 referral.

6 But after Pew heard what we had to  
7 say, and we explained the one that we were  
8 admonished to say, based on the experience of  
9 every other state, You're underestimating the  
10 amount of work that you can get out of that  
11 office, particular because the larger  
12 component to New Pennsylvania is general.

13 So, this distribution of work --  
14 again, director, deputy, lawyer and then a  
15 highly talented administrative assistant. And  
16 among them is going to be everything from  
17 identifying the groups that we can do  
18 referrals to, putting together the website,  
19 and working with the various communities,  
20 working with other agencies to do the work.  
21 So, it's going to be plenty of work for four  
22 people.

23 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: So, it's  
24 going to be spread out --

25 SECRETARY CORTES: It's going to be

1 spread out, and -- forgive me -- to your point  
2 about the state, yes, it's going to be spread  
3 out around the state, but, as you know,  
4 Pennsylvania already has an office for New  
5 Pennsylvanians in Philadelphia. And they have  
6 an office for welcoming in Pittsburgh. So,  
7 the southeast and the southwest are fairly  
8 well covered, but what you're missing is the  
9 whole central part of the state and the  
10 northern tier.

11 And I think that those opportunities  
12 should be spread throughout the state. So,  
13 what we want to do with this office is not  
14 take anything away that is being done in  
15 Philadelphia or Pittsburgh, but instead  
16 collaborate with this group so you can have a  
17 wholistic approach for the entire state.

18 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Well, thank  
19 you for that. And thank you for that  
20 response. I just wanted to highlight, you  
21 know, the enormous impact that this program is  
22 going to have and economic impact, if you  
23 will.

24 But I am going to pivot here for a  
25 minute, and I'm going to put you on the spot.



1 SECRETARY CORTES: Sure.

2 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: I have to ask  
3 you this question. It was brought to my  
4 attention. I don't know all the details and  
5 nuances of this situation, but hopefully you  
6 can help me clarify this.

7 Who's the current commissioner for  
8 the state Athletic Commission?

9 SECRETARY CORTES: His name is Greg  
10 Sirb.

11 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Okay. So,  
12 let me just go through a litany of questions,  
13 and then I'll come back to the question that I  
14 wanted to ask you about this particular  
15 commissioner.

16 How many licensed boxers are --  
17 boxers do we currently have? So how many  
18 licensed?

19 SECRETARY CORTES: So, the  
20 Pennsylvania state Athletic Commission, we  
21 currently have -- and I'll tell you in just a  
22 second -- we have 2100 licensees.

23 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Okay. How  
24 many -- professional license. So, is that  
25 divided between licensed professionals and

1 licensed boxers?

2 SECRETARY CORTES: Yes, so we have --  
3 so we license -- the categories that we  
4 license is boxing, wrestling, kick boxing, and  
5 mixed martial arts. We have a total of 2100  
6 licensees, and they run the gamut from  
7 athletic agents to the announcers to the  
8 boxers themselves, the athletes, the judges,  
9 everyone that is involved in the  
10 administration of the state Athletic  
11 Commission in those four sports that I  
12 mentioned.

13 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Okay. How  
14 many sanctions have gone out for amateur  
15 boxing?

16 SECRETARY CORTES: When you mean  
17 sanction, how many people have been  
18 disciplined?

19 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Right. How  
20 -- do you have that number?

21 SECRETARY CORTES: Not handy, but  
22 I'll be happy to get those for you.

23 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Okay. And  
24 how long -- now I'm going to go back to the  
25 original question. How long has the current

1 commissioner been in that position?

2 SECRETARY CORTES: Greg Sirb has been  
3 the commissioner since 1990, and I had the  
4 pleasure of working with him when I was  
5 secretary before.

6 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Okay. Since  
7 1990.

8 SECRETARY CORTES: Correct.

9 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Are you aware  
10 of a civil lawsuit that was filed in federal  
11 court against the current commissioner?

12 SECRETARY CORTES: I'm aware that --  
13 and, no, so specifically -- and I'd be happy  
14 to discuss specifics about it. I know that  
15 there are people who have issues with our  
16 commissioner, and we don't call him  
17 commissioner. He's -- the chairman of the  
18 state Athletic Commission is Rudy Battle,  
19 African American male, who is in Boxing Hall  
20 of Fame here in Pennsylvania, New Jersey.  
21 You're talking about the executive director,  
22 Greg Sirb, has been in office since 1990, and  
23 as recent as last year was selected the most  
24 valuable person -- the most valuable person in  
25 the sports that we oversee, by the Mid

1 Atlantic Association, which is a regional  
2 component of the U.S.A. boxing.

3 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Okay. So,  
4 he's the executive director of the  
5 Pennsylvania state Athletic --

6 SECRETARY CORTES: He's the day-to-  
7 day administrator.

8 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Are you aware  
9 that there was a civil lawsuit against this --

10 SECRETARY CORTES: I know that over  
11 the years there have been concerns, but, no, I  
12 don't know what specifically you're talking  
13 about.

14 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: So, there was  
15 a lawsuit that was filed against the executive  
16 director on May 25th of 2007, in federal court  
17 of the eastern district of Pennsylvania.

18 SECRETARY CORTES: Okay.

19 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: What is the  
20 outcome, do you know, currently of what  
21 happened with that case?

22 SECRETARY CORTES: I have no idea of  
23 the case itself, so I'll be happy to look into  
24 it.

25 If you have more specifics, please

1 tell me, because -- let me just say this much,  
2 because it seems to me that the line of  
3 questioning is challenging the capacity and  
4 the work and the talent and the contributions  
5 of Greg Sirb.

6 I can tell you here -- and I have  
7 worked with Greg Sirb for now eight years.  
8 Greg Sirb is about the most talented, caring  
9 executive director that we have ever had.  
10 When you're working in sports like boxing and  
11 wrestling and mixed martial arts, it's a tough  
12 sport, and you work with a lot of  
13 personalities that are very vocal and don't  
14 always agree with you.

15 We follow very strict rules in what  
16 we do in terms of licensing, in terms of our  
17 events. I'm very proud of the work of the  
18 state Athletic Commission. We're among the  
19 top five in terms of amount of sports that we  
20 oversee, boxing and mixed martial arts, in the  
21 country.

22 The last year, the state Athletic  
23 Commission made over -- had revenues of over  
24 700,000 dollars, which, for a small board --  
25 commission, is the highest in their history.

1 And, by the way, some of that money eventually  
2 makes it way to the general fund because when  
3 we have extra, we give it back. That's one  
4 group that has never had to come back to ask  
5 us for money because they're very well self-  
6 sufficient. And I will stand behind Greg Sirb  
7 as a very talented and caring individual in a  
8 very difficult job.

9 But if you have very specific  
10 elements about that, you can ask me now or  
11 whenever you'd like. I'd be happy to address  
12 it.

13 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: What I would  
14 like to do is submit this for the record.

15 SECRETARY CORTES: Sure.

16 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: And, you  
17 know, if you have any further information  
18 about this lawsuit, because it talks about his  
19 capacity not only as the executive director,  
20 he was also sued in civil court as he was  
21 actually using his role as an advisor and  
22 consultant and getting paid for that. So, you  
23 know, we want to make sure that we are doing  
24 things in a transparent format. If you can  
25 submit that to the committee, we would like to

1 know what was the outcome of that lawsuit.

2 SECRETARY CORTES: Be happy to do  
3 that, but since we're on the record and others  
4 are looking, so you know and it's clear and  
5 it's all legal, what we do in Pennsylvania is  
6 so well done and we have so much talent here  
7 that, over the years, we have been consultants  
8 to other jurisdictions, including Delaware,  
9 who doesn't have their own commission.

10 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: But --

11 SECRETARY CORTES: It is sanctioned  
12 by me and the Department of State, and it's  
13 approved, and we get reimbursed for those  
14 costs.

15 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: So, you do  
16 get reimbursed as -- on a consultant fee, and  
17 you also get paid for the job; is that  
18 correct?

19 SECRETARY CORTES: No. We are  
20 compensated by other states if we provide  
21 services to other states. Mr. Sirb, if he --  
22 like any other employee, if he submits a  
23 supplemental employment, just -- you know, you  
24 pay for the state and the state is your  
25 primary employer and there's rules with that,

1 but if somebody is -- legislators, you want to  
2 be a lawyer aside from being a legislator, if  
3 that's within the proper terms, that's  
4 correct. So, certainly, so long as he's not  
5 using his position in Pennsylvania to collect  
6 moneys additionally -- that's improper. But  
7 if he's consulting in his free time and he is  
8 approved by the department, that's perfectly  
9 legal and certainly valid.

10 But I'm happy to look at the very  
11 specifics.

12 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Please, if  
13 you can submit the information to the  
14 committee.

15 SECRETARY CORTES: Very happy to do  
16 so.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: We would like  
18 to know what was the outcome of that.

19 SECRETARY CORTES: Very happy to do  
20 so. Thank you. Appreciate it.

21 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: Thank you.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

23 I'm going to ask the members,  
24 Representative Acosta, you were very close to  
25 fifteen minutes.



1 REPRESENTATIVE ACOSTA: I'm sorry.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Okay. And  
3 we've two more hearings today. Okay? And I  
4 don't just pick on big guys. Okay. I just  
5 have to make that comment.

6 And whatever information you have on  
7 those cases, Mr. Secretary, please forward it  
8 to myself and Chairman Markosek.

9 SECRETARY CORTES: Sure. Happy to do  
10 that.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH:  
12 Representative Pyle.

13 REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: Thanks,  
14 Chairman.

15 Mr. Secretary, thank you.

16 You can put me on the clock. I have  
17 some questions. One, I appreciate expanding  
18 suffrage. I've recently been contacted by one  
19 of our larger counties that's going the  
20 opposite direction, talking about shrinking  
21 down the number of polling places for one  
22 centralized voting place. Just, I'd love your  
23 input on that later. I'm trying to stay  
24 within guidelines here.

25 Two, I'm real curious about the

1           validity compliance about online voting. The  
2           numbers you're churning up over there are  
3           pretty considerable. I want to make sure they  
4           are valid. How am I to be assured the  
5           validity of my vote has not been cheapened by  
6           spook, ghost registrations.

7                     Third one --

8                     SECRETARY CORTES: You want an answer  
9           to that one now?

10                    REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: I'm trying to  
11           stay under five. And I got three more here.

12                    SECRETARY CORTES: I'll be happy to  
13           put them in writing for you later.

14                    REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: If we can talk  
15           later, that would be great.

16                    SECRETARY CORTES: Sure. Happy to do  
17           that, too.

18                    REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: I'm sure you  
19           meant earlier -- and I'm very proud that  
20           Pennsylvania is diverse as it is. I'm sure  
21           you meant earlier, in awarding contracts, they  
22           get awarded to the lowest responsible bid,  
23           regardless of race, sex, color, creed,  
24           religion.

25                    SECRETARY CORTES: Correct. And, so

1 you know, our contracts are based on the  
2 Pennsylvania procurement laws, and they not  
3 only account for -- and they account for  
4 everything that is proper and required, I'm  
5 just stating the facts as to who ultimately  
6 gets the contracts, and that -- that is based  
7 on what DGS does and their reviews that come  
8 to us.

9 REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: Lowest  
10 responsible bid.

11 SECRETARY CORTES: Not necessarily.  
12 It's best value, as my understanding.

13 REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: Do we give  
14 preference?

15 SECRETARY CORTES: What's that?

16 REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: Do we give  
17 preference to vendors? And if so, for what?

18 SECRETARY CORTES: Sure. That's a  
19 longer question. I'd be happy -- I know the  
20 answer, and it has to do with the Department  
21 of General Services, but I'm happy to give you  
22 the details.

23 There's very clear Pennsylvania  
24 procurement laws, and that includes the  
25 bidding for contracts, the first being on the

1 list of those who can bid for contracts. And  
2 who eventually bids, has to do with price, has  
3 to do with past performance. It also includes  
4 minority and women participation, for which  
5 you might be allocated a certain percentage of  
6 consideration points as the case might be.

7 We don't do it here. It's done by  
8 DGS, but yes.

9 REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: I appreciate  
10 that. But I'm pretty much out on all of that,  
11 Mr. Secretary. I am not the immigrant,  
12 diverse person that Pennsylvania looks for.  
13 My immigrant group came over about three  
14 hundred years ago, fought in a bunch of wars,  
15 and now we're all steel workers.

16 But if we could --

17 SECRETARY CORTES: And we love you as  
18 well, and we have plenty of those in my  
19 department, and I can give you those  
20 statistics as well.

21 REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: Thank you.

22 SECRETARY CORTES: Make up the  
23 majority.

24 REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: If we can talk  
25 about those questions, specifically diversity

1 versus lowest responsible bid, online voting  
2 validity, and consolidation of polling places  
3 later, I'd appreciate it.

4 SECRETARY CORTES: Sure.

5 REPRESENTATIVE PYLE: Thank you,  
6 Chairman.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,  
8 Representative.

9 Representative Tim Briggs.

10 REPRESENTATIVE BRIGGS: Thank you,  
11 Secretary.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 And I'm not going to take up my five  
14 minutes, but I want to thank you for what you  
15 and Representative Daley did with the online  
16 voter registration.

17 I have a bill, HB413, regarding  
18 online campaign finance reporting. I've had  
19 it for a number of cycles. And is there a way  
20 to -- do we have to legislate that? Is that  
21 something that the department could take care  
22 of on their own?

23 I'm kind of being facetious, but the  
24 question that I wanted to ask was, what sort  
25 of backlog of people who are still filing

1 on -- or on paper that you have to administer  
2 and key punch? And the second thing is, just  
3 the percentage of the number of people who  
4 still report online.

5 SECRETARY CORTES: Yes. Very  
6 quickly. So -- and this -- for this  
7 nomination -- well, campaign finance in  
8 general, the numbers, as of fiscal year, you  
9 know, fiscal year '14-'15, we had about 61  
10 percent still filing the campaign finance  
11 filings paper, 39 percent electronic. It  
12 improved slightly.

13 So, when we closed this past year,  
14 we're now looking -- actually as December of  
15 this year, we're looking at now it went  
16 from -- from 61 percent paper, now to 57  
17 percent paper, which means that we still  
18 handle a significant amount paper base, time  
19 consuming, very costly, takes longer to get  
20 the records, although we do scan everything  
21 before it gets out to data entry, so we can  
22 always provide to media and others who need  
23 information immediately.

24 If you were to give me a bill that,  
25 among others things, calls for electronic

1 filing of campaign finance, we will be saving  
2 a lot of dollars. There will be significant  
3 efficiencies, greater transparency, and it  
4 will all around make things a lot better, if  
5 we were talking just about that element. That  
6 certainly will be very helpful to the  
7 department.

8 REPRESENTATIVE BRIGGS: I'm trying.  
9 I'm trying to get you that bill.

10 SECRETARY CORTES: I appreciate it.

11 REPRESENTATIVE BRIGGS: But we'll  
12 continue to work on it. Thank you.

13 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you, sir.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,  
15 Representative.

16 Representative Karen Boback.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Hello,  
18 Mr. Secretary, welcome. Pardon me.

19 My question is also with Bureau of  
20 Election campaign finances. Do you feel that  
21 your staff, your complement is sufficient to  
22 handle the workload in that office?

23 SECRETARY CORTES: We have -- let me  
24 say -- the short answer is yes, but that's  
25 partially because we are extremely hard

1 working and because we care deeply. And we  
2 have found efficiencies that will help us. As  
3 we continue to improve our technologies, we  
4 now have more individuals filing, even doing  
5 notaries and their renewals online.

6 So, we're always challenged here,  
7 particularly difficult because it's a  
8 presidential election year, so -- we, in our  
9 request and our complement, we ask --  
10 certainly we want to stay where we are, at a  
11 minimum, and we could use some extra bodies.  
12 It's a lot of work.

13 And what many people don't realize is  
14 that within the Bureau of Commissions,  
15 Elections, Legislations, and Notaries, we do  
16 not -- much more than just elections and  
17 campaign finance and lobbying disclosure. We  
18 have heavy ministerial. We are the agency  
19 that issues all the commissions. We handle  
20 the legislation. We track the bills, so when  
21 it eventually becomes act such number from  
22 2016, we're the ones that have been tracking  
23 that and assign those numbers. A significant  
24 amount of work.

25 And the bureau has been severely cut



1 over the years, and -- and so we hope that at  
2 least can stop that trend, because it's  
3 important work, and we certainly need all the  
4 bodies that we can have.

5 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: I hope you do  
6 stop that trend, because it's so important  
7 that when you call that office, you get a  
8 human being, and that's what I've heard from  
9 my colleagues and from people outside of  
10 legislation, that when they call your office,  
11 they get to speak to a person.

12 SECRETARY CORTES: Yes.

13 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Very, very  
14 important. And when we see staff cuts, many  
15 times we see it with the human element. And  
16 that's -- to me, that's wrong, because this is  
17 taxpayer dollars, and taxpayers have the right  
18 to get their answers by a human being.

19 SECRETARY CORTES: Sure.

20 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Instead of  
21 being referred, in my opinion, to a computer.

22 And with that being said, with your  
23 finance -- with the campaign finance portion  
24 of the bureau, you still have people there  
25 that if there's a specific question with their

1 registration, they can call and get  
2 directives; correct?

3 SECRETARY CORTES: Absolutely. So,  
4 we have a chief in that division, Trisha  
5 Malehorn, very talented. She's the chief of  
6 the division of campaign finance and lobbying  
7 disclosure. And we have two other staff that  
8 work with her in that particular division.

9 But it's a significant amount of  
10 work, and I hope that your experience and that  
11 of many in the room and others in terms of the  
12 last cycle for nomination papers was a good  
13 one. We work very closely with other  
14 agencies, like we did in this case with the  
15 Public Utility Commission to have use of the  
16 Hearing Room 1.

17 So, we are improving the technology,  
18 improving the procedure, being very creative  
19 to provide the best customer care, the best  
20 customer service experience, but certainly  
21 being able to have your questions answered --  
22 yours and anyone else, to be answered by a  
23 human is something that we strive for. So,  
24 we're finding efficiencies and making use of  
25 technology to continue to provide the best

1 service possible, regardless of the staff.

2 But we're challenged.

3 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Well, and to  
4 conclude, you are to be commended as well as  
5 your staff. And that was, I thought it was  
6 wonderful that you kept open on a holiday to  
7 accommodate those people who could not get  
8 down to do their registration. So, once  
9 again, kudos to and your staff. Thank you.

10 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you,  
11 representative. Appreciate it.

12 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you,  
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,  
15 Representative.

16 Chairman Metcalfe, for a brief  
17 comment.

18 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Thank you,  
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 Mr. Secretary, just to clarify, there  
21 was a line of questioning fairly extensive  
22 earlier, and some of it related to your new  
23 office that you're proposing for New  
24 Pennsylvanians.

25 The conversation that you and I had

1 with Senator Folmer and staff prior to this  
2 hearing, in that conversation, you related to  
3 us that this office was in no way directed at  
4 trying to attract anyone who was here  
5 illegally into Pennsylvania as a new resident.

6 SECRETARY CORTES: That is --

7 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: I just want  
8 it to be clear, because "immigrant" is thrown  
9 around a lot. My wife's an immigrant to this  
10 country. She's a naturalized citizen. My  
11 son-in-law's an immigrant to this country.  
12 He's a naturalized citizen. We want  
13 immigrants, but those that are here legally,  
14 not illegally.

15 So, I just wanted to clarify. This  
16 new office is in no way directed to be  
17 utilized to attract anyone here that is in  
18 this nation illegally.

19 SECRETARY CORTES: Correct. So, yes.  
20 So, the office and -- the office is intended  
21 to be a resource for any potential new  
22 Pennsylvanian. Inevitably, what I can  
23 anticipate is that you may get a phone call  
24 from someone who says, you know, I have a  
25 question, and usually they're not going to

1 say: I'm undocumented, and I want you to help  
2 me.

3 It may be like that, but it could be  
4 more: Can you -- do you provide legal  
5 services? Where can I go with defer action?  
6 Or where can I go to strength my paperwork.

7 So, certainly as a customer service  
8 entity, we're not going to hang up the phone  
9 on the person but most likely say there are  
10 other resources that can do that for you, and  
11 if we have them handy, we'll provide them.

12 But, no, the office is intended to  
13 focus on the many thousands of already  
14 American citizens who live in other states and  
15 also to many thousands and millions of other  
16 immigrants that are here, documented, and for  
17 those individuals, we'd certainly be looking  
18 to provide the services that we outline,  
19 including business development and the others.

20 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Not just  
21 focus. The office is intended to serve only  
22 legal residents or citizens of this nation.

23 SECRETARY CORTES: The office is  
24 intended to attract and retain Pennsylvanians  
25 to our state, and our focus is not in matters

1 of -- legal matters. So, we're not meddling  
2 with immigration status and the like. It's  
3 about attracting and retaining talented  
4 individuals that have -- will be able to work  
5 in the state.

6 So, to your point, just to go back,  
7 you're talking about a person that is legal in  
8 the country. Remind you, again, that when  
9 we're talking about -- we are not -- I use the  
10 terms very carefully. I don't say "citizens,"  
11 because you have plenty of legal, permanent  
12 residents who are in the country legally and  
13 have the right to be here, have the right to  
14 work and every other right, and those  
15 individuals we will help.

16 And we're going to help them and we  
17 want them to -- if they need to improve their  
18 English, we want to do that, as I discussed  
19 with you. And if we need to help them so they  
20 can obtain their citizenship and take their  
21 classes, we're going to help them as well.

22 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: As I  
23 clarified also, I'm using the term the same  
24 way, those who are here legally, whether  
25 they're legal resident aliens or they're

1 citizens.

2 SECRETARY CORTES: This is not an  
3 immigration office. And I don't have enough  
4 time or resources. You probably cannot give  
5 me enough to try to get everything that will  
6 be needed for a focus that will be that broad.

7 It's very narrow. And as I outlined  
8 to you, and I can repeat those again, the  
9 Office for New Pennsylvanians is intended to  
10 assist with citizenship and naturalization of  
11 those who are in that process, civil  
12 engagement, workforce development,  
13 entrepreneurial assistance, and professional  
14 licensure.

15 REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: I just  
16 think the viewing public wants to know this  
17 office is focused on those individuals who are  
18 here legally, whether they're legal resident  
19 aliens, or whether they're refugees here  
20 legally, or whether they're American citizens.

21 SECRETARY CORTES: Correct. The  
22 funding will be used, I can assure you, for --  
23 for purposes that are appropriate and are  
24 legal and will be of much benefit to the  
25 state.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE METCALFE: Thank you.

2 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

3                   Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Last  
5 question by Representative Mike O'Brien.

6                   REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Thank you,  
7 Mr. Chairman.

8                   Secretary, how you doing?

9                   SECRETARY CORTES: I'm doing great.  
10 Thank you, sir.

11                   REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: It's  
12 Chairman Adolph's way to take the committee  
13 out on the road, take us around the state, let  
14 us see what these appropriated dollars do,  
15 bring back to the commonwealth.

16                   A year or so ago, the chairman took  
17 us down to Adams County. I was shocked to  
18 find out that none of the apples produced in  
19 Adams County really leave Adams County. They  
20 go to Mott's and Musselman, and hundreds of  
21 thousand square foot factories and made into  
22 applesauce. And I've always wondered why we  
23 get Washington state apples in the cafeteria.  
24 Now I know why.

25                   Now, during the course of our tour,



1 we drove past and it was pointed out by our  
2 host that hovel that guest workers were housed  
3 in. So, I suppose my question is of help that  
4 would given to agricultural workers, what  
5 would be within the scope of this office,  
6 number one. And number two, do we have any  
7 idea how many guest workers we have in the  
8 state each agricultural season?

9 SECRETARY CORTES: So, the answer to  
10 the -- the latter part, I don't have the  
11 statistics on how many guest workers are in  
12 Pennsylvania. I'm sure they're easily found  
13 through the Department of Agriculture and  
14 other sources.

15 Those individuals that are working,  
16 you know, you're talking specifically about  
17 the migrant workers, they're here to -- at  
18 least the majority, and I would think of the  
19 ones that we can help are here properly  
20 documented. I'm trying to think of what would  
21 be the scenario that someone would come to us.  
22 Again, we're not doing legal work, so we're  
23 not working on actions to help you become a  
24 citizen necessarily, unless you're already in  
25 the pipeline because you have a -- you know,

1 you're here already properly documented.

2           And -- but it could be someone that  
3 is on the road to becoming a citizen, one of  
4 those individuals have seen the benefits of  
5 agriculture. They want to open their own  
6 business. That person is perfectly --  
7 perfectly acceptable for us to put them in  
8 contact with the appropriate resources within  
9 the Department of Community and Economic  
10 Development and send them on their way.

11           With four staff, we are going to be  
12 doing a good amount of referrals, and the  
13 majority is going to be collecting  
14 information, developing the website and the  
15 database, and it's going to be working with  
16 partners that will ultimately provide the  
17 service.

18           So, yeah, I think that there's --  
19 there are scenarios under which we might be  
20 able to interact with those individuals. You  
21 know, again, Pennsylvania has so many  
22 institutions of higher learning, and I want to  
23 advantage everyone, but we have so many  
24 talented individuals, bright minds that are  
25 here, going to college and other

1 opportunities, again, all properly documented  
2 with the proper papers, and they might just  
3 need a little bit more guidance and, quite  
4 frankly, pitch the case for why they should  
5 remain in Pennsylvania as opposed to go to  
6 California, Texas, or return back home.

7 That's -- so that's the emphasis of  
8 the office. Try to make sure that we have a  
9 vibrant, growing population that can  
10 contribute significantly, positively to the  
11 economy, but our way of life in general, which  
12 I think everybody agrees, the immigrants have  
13 been doing for, what did we hear, four hundred  
14 years, five hundred years?

15 REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Yes.

16 SECRETARY CORTES: That's the goal.

17 REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Thank you,  
18 sir.

19 My folks got here a hundred seventy-  
20 five years ago. They chose to burn down our  
21 churches. But we made do.

22 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

23 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you,  
24 Representative O'Brien.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,

1 Representative.

2 Mr. Secretary, your staff, I want to  
3 thank you for being here today. I appreciate  
4 the discussion that we had on the budget and  
5 other policy decisions that you're undertaking  
6 and looking forward to working with you  
7 between now and the end of June.

8 SECRETARY CORTES: Thanks,  
9 Mr. Chairman.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: For the  
11 members' information, we are going to take a  
12 five-minute break, and we'll reconvene at  
13 3 o'clock with the DCNR. Thank you.

14 SECRETARY CORTES: Thank you,  
15 Mr. Chairman.

16 (Whereupon, the hearing concluded at  
17 2:56 p.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that I was present upon the hearing of the above-entitled matter and there reported stenographically the proceedings had and the testimony produced; and I further certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of my said stenographic notes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
BRENDA J. PARDUN, RPR  
Court Reporter  
Notary Public