

Opening Access to the Ballot Box by Allowing Independents to Vote in Primary Elections Needs to be Priority

By Senator Lisa Boscola
Legislative Spotlight
As election season approaches, it is appropriate to talk about our Independent voters who are disenfranchised from choosing the candidates that are on the ballot in these upcoming elections as they are left out from the primary election process here in the Commonwealth. For more than 25 years, I have been a leading voice, unrelenting advocate, supporter and prime sponsor of bills to give voters unaffiliated with any party the right to

LEGISLATIVE Spotlight

'Now is the time to provide **all voters** full participation privileges in our elections.'

LISA M. BOSCOLA
State Senator - 18th District

participate in our primary elections. Membership in a political party (or the decision to avoid joining a political party) should not dictate whether a voter can vote in a primary.

I am happy that my colleagues in the House on both sides of the aisle are starting to embrace the idea of allowing Independents to vote in our primary elections. Our democracy is fragile and it will only thrive with increased participation. The more educated and informed voters we can get to the ballot box the better off our democracy will be.

For me it started in my first session in the House in 1996 with HB 2411 and has continued every session since, including this one with the introduction of SB400. This bill seeks to allow unaffiliated/Independent voters the ability to choose a primary to participate in, either Democratic or Republican. It looks like the persistence is paying off. Several similar bills have been introduced by colleagues on both sides of the aisle and grassroots organizations are speaking out in favor of changing our antiquated primary system. It comes as no surprise that Pennsylvania lags behind other states being one of only nine states that has such a restrictive system.

Now, more than ever, we need citizens to be engaged. If we are going to steer this democracy to calm waters and take our government back from the party bosses and the fringes of each party, it will take every voter getting involved and making their opinions known.

Our democracy works best when citizen participation is maximized. By allowing more registered voters to fully participate in our elections process, i.e. voting in primaries, we can improve our democracy. Drawing the line at two parties makes no sense. It is time to provide all voters full participation privileges in our elections.



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Boscola Bulletin

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 **LISA BOSCOLA** 18TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

Manufacturing PA Training-to-Career Grant Program

By Senator Lisa Boscola

Applications are now open for the Pennsylvania Manufacturing Training-to-Career Grant Program. This program supports projects that provide short-term work-readiness training, helping individuals gain the skills needed for entry-level manufacturing jobs. The mission of this program is to work collaboratively with local manufacturers to identify and teach missing essential skills for entry level applicants for existing or near future open positions, engage youth or those with barriers in awareness building activities of career opportunities in manufacturing, and/or advance capacity for local or regional manufacturers.



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Eligible applicants include any nonprofit organization (such as a workforce development board, manufacturing association, or business education coalition) and/or training partner (such as a technical and trade school, school district or post-secondary academic institution) to meet the entry level skills needed by Pennsylvania manufacturers.

For more information, including program guidelines, or to apply, please click here http://enews.senatorboscola.com/mail/util.cfm?mailaction=clickthru&gpiv=2100170433.4033.286&gen=1&mailing_linkid=22017.

Updates & Expansions: Virtual UC Services Now Give Pennsylvanians Faster, More Accurate Support Upgrades To The Uc Chat Function Include More Conversational Responses And Enhanced Flow For A Smoother User Experience

By Senator Lisa Boscola

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) today announced recent updates to its Unemployment Compensation (UC) virtual assistant, giving Pennsylvanians faster, more accurate, and more conversational support when seeking help with unemployment benefits.

Available 24/7 at pa.gov/uc, the upgraded UC Live Chat system provides improved responses, enhanced conversation flow, and more robust guidance on common filing questions. Users can access the virtual assistant by selecting the chat icon on the right side of the page to begin chatting with L&I's virtual assistant for UC services.

Modernizing the unemployment system means more than just clearing backlogs: it means giving people accessible tools that work.

The updated system introduces several key enhancements, including:

Natural language understanding - Claimants can now ask questions in their own words and receive clear, conversational responses

Contextual awareness - The assistant can reference previous messages to deliver more relevant and accurate information

Clarification and escalation - If a question is unclear or cannot be answered, the system will ask for clarification and offer a handoff to a live representative

Fuzzy matching - The assistant can now recognize typos, alternate phrasing, and incomplete questions

Faster updates - Powered by Google Dialogflow CX, L&I can add new information and improve responses in real time, keeping pace with changing claimant needs