

Interview with Pete Schweyer

Rough Draft

Meeting was held on Thursday, April 1st.

Barb Williams and Mary Erdman, unable to sign on FDPA member George Grubb.

We discussed the following topics:

1. **HB 22 - the LACRA Bill.** Rep. Schweyer has cosponsored the legislation and agrees with the bill in principle. He commented that he sees a tough road for the passage of this bill, unless many organizations join the LWV as well as FDPA in promoting the passage. If a number of organizations publicly stand up for the passage of HB 22 and SB 222, he feels that is the only thing which will move this bill to a vote.
2. He referred to **HB 38, judicial gerrymandering** as an example of how unions, bar associations and trial lawyers among others - joined the LWV and FDPA in opposing such a damaging bill. This outpouring of support against this bill was powerful in causing the Republican leadership to table this bill for an indefinite amount of time. However, he said if they have enough votes to pass it they may quickly move it to a vote which we all agreed would be a dangerous blow to representative democracy.
3. Rep Schweyer also feels that there has been some movement by both parties to open the process of **redistricting** and does not view the Democrats as looking at the redistricting process as a “payback” for the last 20 years of extreme gerrymandering by the other party. He commended FDPA and the LWV for their vigilance and keeping many eyes on this process. He is hoping that the Legislative Reapportionment Commission will choose a seasoned mediator-type person to work together with the two party leaders. In this time of

hyper-partisanship, this task becomes more difficult. However, the results of redistricting, as Rep. Schweyer commented, will be with us for ten years until 2031.

4. **The Allentown School District.** Rep Schweyer made an interesting comment about the School District as the “Community of Interest” to be considered during redistricting. He pointed out that the ASD is represented by only two PA state representatives, unlike Salisbury SD and the Bethlehem SD, which are much smaller than the Allentown SD, yet they each are represented by three PA representatives which gives them a bit more voting power in Harrisburg.

5. **Open Primaries** - Rep. Schweyer said that even though he has objected to open primaries in the past; that he has changed his view and is now a proponent of open primaries moving forward.

6. There was then a discussion about the Allentown School District and the help, assistance and sustained leadership that is needed instead of the apparent revolving door that has occurred with principals and especially Superintendents. Rep. Schweyer commented that having **a third legislator** may help secure more funds for one of PA’s largest school districts and also one of the least funded school districts. The discussion was that the ASD, should perhaps look from within to hire a superintendent who is vested in the community and the school district.

We thanked Rep. Schweyer for his generous time and openness in answering the questions during today’s meeting.