

# State/Nation

## Pennsylvania court sides with Trump, tossing some ballots

By JEREMY ROEBUCK  
The Philadelphia Inquirer/TNS

PHILADELPHIA — A Pennsylvania appellate court handed President Donald Trump's campaign a minor victory Thursday, barring counties from including in their final vote tallies a small pool of mail ballots from people who had failed to provide required ID by a Monday deadline.

In a two-page order, a Commonwealth Court judge struck down a decision by the administration of Gov. Tom Wolf to give voters more time, post-election, to fulfill the ID requirement.

Although state law only requires first-time voters to show ID at the polls, all voters who applied to vote by mail had to be validated their identification against state records by Nov. 9.

Two days before the election, Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar pushed that date back by three days, citing a court decision earlier this year that allowed late-arriving mail ballots to be counted as long as they had been mailed by Nov. 3 and received within three days of that date.

In her order Thursday, Commonwealth Court President Judge Mary Hannah Leavitt ruled that Boockvar had no authority to do that. State officials did not immediately return requests for comment on whether they intended to appeal.

None of the votes affected by the ruling had yet been included in the state's official tally — which as of Thursday had Joe Biden at a 54,000-vote advantage over Trump.

But it was unclear

just how many ballots statewide would now be thrown out.

For instance, in Philadelphia, the state's largest county, elections officials on Wednesday issued a list of just more than 2,100 mail ballots in danger of being disqualified because the voter had not provided proof of ID with their application — typically done by providing a driver's license number — or the proof they did provide did not match information on voter rolls.

City officials issued the list in hopes that those voters could provide the necessary information by the Thursday deadline. But under the Commonwealth Court order, all of them will

now be excluded whether the voter responded to the Wednesday alert by providing ID or not.

In shifting the ID deadline, Boockvar, an appointee of Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf, had argued that because a mid-September Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision had created a three-day grace period for late-arriving mail ballots postmarked by Nov. 3 to arrive in county election offices, the ID deadlines should naturally be extended as well.

Leavitt, a Republican, disagreed, noting in her order that had the Supreme Court's justices wanted an extension, they could have said so in their earlier ruling.



Tim Tai/The Philadelphia Inquirer/TNS

**A Commonwealth Court judge has ruled Pennsylvania Secretary of the Commonwealth Kathy Boockvar, shown here, had no authority to push back by three days a date for vote by mail voters to validate their identification against state records.**

## Washington stockpiles N95 masks amid new coronavirus wave

By MIKE REICHER  
The Seattle Times/TNS

SEATTLE — Sitting in a Washington state government warehouse are more than 30 million N95 masks — enough to provide every one of the state's health care workers nearly 100 masks each.

They're sitting there even though nearly all of the state's hospitals are reusing their N95s or otherwise conserving supply, as the nation faces a looming shortage and Washington's COVID-19 cases spike to the highest levels in the pandemic.

Does the stockpile represent careful planning by state officials for this surge, or a missed opportunity to provide about \$90 million of needed masks?

Some in the industry support the state's reserves, but others suggest the stockpile has grown because the masks are too large for a mostly female health care workforce. And some providers have been unable to obtain them because the ordering process is a bureaucratic maze.

Nearly all of the state's N95s are a model unfamiliar to hospitals, developed during the pandemic by a Chinese auto manufacturer.

Since April, state officials have maintained strict qualifications on who can receive the free N95s, and have recently said they are intentionally maintaining an emergency supply.

Without N95s, providers struggle to follow workplace safety laws and employees risk their own health while caring for patients.

"I have referred to the stockpile multiple times as a unicorn," said John Ficker, executive director of the Adult Family Home Council, which represents more than

3,000 long-term care facilities. "I haven't talked to anybody who can show me how to actually get access to it."

In the spring, as the first coronavirus wave blazed through Washington, Gov. Jay Inslee's administration launched a frantic effort to find personal protective equipment, awarding no-bid contracts to some companies with little experience manufacturing health care supplies.

Hospitals' normal supply chains had run bare, especially for the N95 respirator mask, the most critical piece of protective equipment for front-line medical staff, and the Strategic National Stockpile failed to quickly fill the gaps.

So far the state has purchased more than \$407 million of equipment — including gowns, gloves and sanitizer — and has received some donations and shipments from the national stockpile. About half of the equipment acquired by the state has already been distributed.

N95 masks make up the largest category of spending. Washington has distributed about 6 million N95s to county emergency managers, prisons, dentists, fruit farmers and other groups. More than 80% of the masks, though, remain in an undisclosed warehouse.

Reed Schuler, a senior adviser to Gov. Jay Inslee, said the state did not make a "determination to hold back a large level of inventory." Instead, he said, the mask stockpile reflected the small number of "qualified requests received" compared to the large number of respirators ordered. The state has viewed its supply as an "emergency backstop," he said.

# TIPS FOR HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

As many people begin to plan for fall and winter holiday celebrations the **Grant County Health District** offers the following considerations to help protect you from COVID-19.

**Giving thanks** | In a year filled with challenges, highlight bright spots by writing them down or sending notes, texts or emails to people in your life to express why you are grateful for them.

**On-screen get togethers** | Sure, it isn't quite the same, but scheduling a virtual holiday gathering and getting together online can take the sting out of being separated. Consider time zones and help those who are not tech-savvy early so that they can be included.

**Secret gift exchange** | Assign each person a name, ask them to mail or a no-contact delivery of a small gift they make or buy to their person. Open gifts on a group video chat and try to guess who gave what to whom.

**Learn a recipe together** | Haven't you always thought Nonna deserves a cooking show? Pick a favorite family recipe, share an ingredient list then get together virtually to try cooking or baking.

**While the traditional feast, end-of-year parties, and crowded tables are on hold, there are still fulfilling ways to enjoy the holidays with family and friends.**

**Remote potluck** | Rather than a get together, assign dishes to friends and family and deliver to one another's homes. Or deliver just the ingredients for a dish or meal. Then, login to your favorite video chat app to cook or dig in.

**Play dress-up** | If you have a willing crowd, create a theme for your virtual party. Themed masks, silly hats or ugly sweaters can give everyone something to laugh and talk about.

**Game night** | If you love competition, have a virtual game night. Trivia, charades, and board games, can all work great online. Maybe a virtual bake-off, talent show or scavenger hunt. Also a fun way for kids to connect virtually with friends.

If you choose to celebrate with friends or family in person it increases the risk of COVID-19. Keep the group small, gathering outside if possible. Wear masks, social distance and avoid sharing food or beverages.

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