UNCOUNTED WRITE-IN VOTES & BALLOT ACCESS

The flip side of the ballot access coin is that when candidates are denied ballot access by Pennsylvania's unequal ballot access laws, and then choose to run a write-in campaign rather than give up on the voters they represent, they face the added obstacle that some counties in Pennsylvania won't count the write-in votes that are cast for them. This makes the effect of PA's discriminatory ballot access laws even worse than it would otherwise be!

There is a good chance your vote wasn't counted if you voted for a write-in candidate. The likelihood of that happening depends on what county you live in and what candidate you wrote-in. Votes for more popular write-in candidates are more likely to be tabulated than candidates who only get a handful of votes. The law requires county boards of elections to tabulate votes and submit a certified tabulation of those votes to the Secretary of State. But the Bureau of Commissions, Elections, and Legislation (BCEL), which is the Department of State Division that handles this, has little ability to compel county election boards to count the write-ins. Some counties report a thorough breakdown with all write-in votes. Some counties report totals for popular candidates and combined total for all the other candidates. Some counties only report a combined total of all write-in votes for a particular office, without breaking out tallies for any particular candidates. And a few counties don't report write-in votes AT ALL!

Choosing not to count write-in votes is another way in which the election process in Pennsylvania is structured to discriminate against voters having meaningful choices. If it were not bad enough that PA limits your choices in the voting booth, they often go the additional step of not counting your vote if you refuse to have your choices constrained to whom they deem ballot worthy.

DID MY VOTE COUNT?

Curious about how your county handled write-in votes in the 2010 election? The links below summarize the write-in votes reported in the certified vote totals reported by each Pennsylvania County Election Board for the 2010 General Election.

http://paballotaccess.org/documents/write-ins/pa_total_write_in_votes_2010.pdf
This link provides the total number of write-in votes cast in 2010 for: US Senator, Governor and Lt. Gov., with a breakout for Sam Rohrer's campaign; each US House of Representatives seat; each PA Senate seat that was up for election; and each PA House seat. It also lists the 8 counties that did not report any write-ins: Clarion, Clinton, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mifflin, Montgomery, Perry, and Philadelphia!

http://paballotaccess.org/documents/write-ins/pa_gov_con_write_in_votes_2010.pdf
This link details the write-in votes certified for US Senate, Governor and Lt. Governor, and US House of Representatives for each county. Users are advised to access and read the notes (see below) which explain how to interpret the data in this document.

http://paballotaccess.org/documents/write-ins/pa_gen_assy_write_in_votes_2010.pdf
This link details the write-in votes certified for PA legislative offices for each county. Users are advised to access and read the notes (see below) which explain how to interpret the data in this document.

http://paballotaccess.org/documents/write-ins/pa_write_in_votes_2010_notes.pdf
This link provides some important notes for understanding the data, particularly a legend for what the color-coded categorizations mean.