

Overview on Disaster Emergency Declaration and Management Ballot Question

On May 18, 2021, voters will head to the polls to participate in the primary election. The ballot will feature races for municipal offices, a few county offices, and state judges. Some voters will participate in special elections. All voters (including independent) will be asked to decide on three constitutional amendments and a statewide referendum, including the ability to declare a disaster emergency declaration and for how long.

Background

Following news of COVID-19 cases in PA, the governor signed an emergency disaster declaration on March 6, 2020. He further ordered closure of the physical operation of non-life sustaining businesses across the state to mitigate exposure of the virus and some orders continue to remain in effect.

The legislature questioned timelines, administrative responses, data, and ultimately pushed through a constitutional amendment that provides voters the option to decide on the management and ability to declare emergency declarations.

What will the ballot measure do?

The ballot measure would add a new section to the Pennsylvania Constitution adding a 21-day limit on disaster emergencies, including public health, natural disasters, and other types of emergencies.

Supporters of the measure state that the approval by voters will ensure the legislature has a say in the handlings of emergency declarations and can act as a more equal branch of state government.

Opposition against the measure raise concern that its passage would hinder the response time by the state, access to services, and require the legislature to vote to continue the measure every 3 weeks.

Understanding Options

See below for an understanding on how answers will factor into the ballot measure:

A **"yes"** vote supports this constitutional amendment to limit a current and future PA governor's emergency declaration to 21 days unless the legislature votes on a concurrent resolution to extend the order and directs the legislature to pass laws related to how disaster emergencies must be managed.

A **"no"** vote opposes this constitutional amendment, meaning current and future PA Governors would be allowed to issue emergency declarations without a legislative vote after 21 days.

Disclaimer

YCEA has not adopted a formal stance on any of the constitutional amendments. Voters are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the ballot questions and offices on the ballot before they vote. A sample ballot may be accessed on the [County's Voting and Elections webpage](#).

An overview of the three additional ballot questions and the YoCo Voter Guide may be found by [clicking here](#).

Make Your Vote Happen.