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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 401 Session of  
2024

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INTRODUCED BY WARNER, ECKER, MARCELL, KUTZ, ROWE, BERNSTINE,  
STRUZZI, MOUL, MAJOR, KEEFER, KAUFFMAN, JAMES AND JOZWIAK,  
APRIL 24, 2024

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, APRIL 24, 2024

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A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the House of Representatives to restrict the times of day  
2 in which legislative votes may be cast and prohibit secret  
3 votes creating a more efficient and effective government  
4 through greater transparency and accountability.

5 WHEREAS, Government transparency is essential for ensuring  
6 accountability, trust and participation of the public in  
7 democratic processes; and

8 WHEREAS, Government transparency can enhance the quality and  
9 effectiveness of public policies and services, as well as  
10 prevent and combat corruption and abuse of power; and

11 WHEREAS, Government transparency can foster civic engagement,  
12 innovation and social inclusion by enabling citizens to access  
13 and use public information for various purposes; and

14 WHEREAS, The House Appropriations Committee violated the  
15 principles of transparency and accountability when it passed a  
16 last-minute amendment to Senate Bill 224, a bill that would  
17 significantly alter the Pennsylvania Election Code, without  
18 proper public input or debate on October 4, 2023, at 11:00 p.m.;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, The amendment was introduced and voted on by the  
3 House Appropriations Committee without giving representatives  
4 sufficient time to review the amendment's content, consult with  
5 relevant stakeholder groups and communicate with constituents  
6 about the significant policy changes affecting elections and  
7 voting; and

8 WHEREAS, The House Appropriations Committee meeting was  
9 scheduled in a way that made it difficult for the people of our  
10 Commonwealth to partake in the democratic process and learn  
11 about the public policy issues being discussed in the  
12 legislature; and

13 WHEREAS, The late-night timing of the House Appropriations  
14 Committee meeting largely prevented Pennsylvanians from  
15 participating in the legislative process and contacting their  
16 elected representatives regarding their views and concerns on  
17 legislation; and

18 WHEREAS, The House Appropriations Committee's recent actions  
19 have drawn comparisons to the 2005 controversy surrounding the  
20 2:00 a.m. pay raise vote; and

21 WHEREAS, This midnight madness is a disservice to the House  
22 of Representatives and the people of Pennsylvania that it  
23 represents; and

24 WHEREAS, These actions undermine the transparency and  
25 accountability of the legislative process and may lead to hasty  
26 or ill-informed decisions; and

27 WHEREAS, The quote "democracy dies in darkness" is often  
28 attributed to renowned reporter Bob Woodward, who exposed the  
29 Watergate scandal, and the quote implies that a democratic  
30 system of government depends on the availability and

1 accessibility of information to the public and that without  
2 transparency and accountability, corruption and abuse of power  
3 can flourish; and

4 WHEREAS, Public policy is best considered during the day, on  
5 the House floor, with all representatives present, with the  
6 public reasonably able to observe and access information that  
7 affects their lives and well-being; and

8 WHEREAS, House Rule 15, which aims to ensure transparency,  
9 requires that no roll call votes be taken after 11:00 p.m.  
10 unless exigent circumstances exist, as determined by an  
11 affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members to agree to  
12 extend the session; and

13 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act requires agencies to  
14 deliberate and take official action on agency business in an  
15 open and public meeting, and the act requires that meetings have  
16 prior notice and that the public can attend, participate and  
17 comment before an agency takes that official action; therefore  
18 be it

19 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge this chamber  
20 to restrict the times of day in which legislative votes may be  
21 cast and prohibit secret votes, creating a more efficient and  
22 effective government through greater transparency and  
23 accountability; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives conduct business  
25 during practical hours of the day and in a way that allows the  
26 residents of the Commonwealth to observe and follow the  
27 proceedings; and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives aim to work in a  
29 bipartisan, cooperative way to give members enough notice of  
30 meeting announcement, agenda content and amendments; and be it

1 further

2 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives function in a way  
3 that is similar to other Commonwealth agencies and in line with  
4 the spirit of Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives consider revising  
6 its operating rules to prohibit committee votes after 11:00  
7 p.m., just as is the case for the full House of Representatives;  
8 and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives hereby declare  
10 its commitment to transparency in all aspects of government  
11 operations and decision-making processes and strive to provide  
12 timely and accurate information to the public.