PA Voters: Trust is Falling
Election Reform Appetite Rising

DATE: Monday, April 13, 2026
TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Alex Tarascio, Principal & Pollster, Cygnal
RE: Survey of n600 Likely General Election Voters in Pennsylvania

Executive Summary

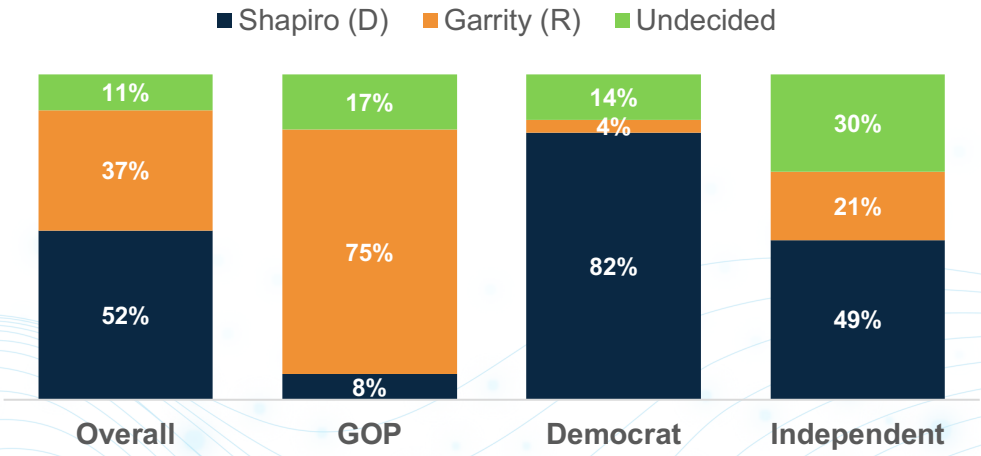
Pennsylvania enters 2026 with a Democratic-leaning environment. Josh Shapiro leads Stacy Garrity by double digits, the generic congressional ballot sits at D+6, but voters are increasingly uneasy about how elections are run. Only 14% say PA election administration is getting more trustworthy, and unease is not limited to Republicans: just 23% of Democrats and 7% of Unaffiliateds have greater trust. 25% of voters anticipate widespread, results-altering fraud in 2026 - matching retrospective 2020 levels.

Reform appetite is real: 60% say the system needs major or some changes, and voters are open to fixing problems without believing the system is fundamentally broken. Pre-canvassing is the lowest-resistance reform on the table (net +26, 51–25), voter ID commands majority support (54%), and Shapiro's anticipated opposition is a net negative with swing voters and Independents alike.

The Political Environment

Shapiro leads Garrity 52–37, with 12% undecided, showing a favorable Democratic environment, but not one that's locked-in. The generic congressional ballot sits at D+6 (48–42). Undecideds on the governor's race are 51% Republican, suggesting the coalition is not lost but currently unpersuaded.

Affordability dominates the issue landscape at 42% (inflation 24%, jobs 12%, housing 6%). Elections register as a meaningful second-tier priority at 12%, split between election integrity (8%) and election rules and voting reform (5%). These voters are disproportionately Republican (58 R–31 D) and the highest-propensity in the survey: 85% voted in 3 or 4 of the last 4 elections. They will show up.



A Cross-Partisan Confidence Crisis

Just 14% of Pennsylvania voters say elections in the state are getting more trustworthy, and this is not a Republican complaint alone. Only 23% of Democrats and 7% of Independents agree that trust is growing. Pennsylvania does hold a significant credibility advantage over national election administration: 55% say elections nationally are getting less trustworthy, compared to 30% who say so about Pennsylvania.

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	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent
More trustworthy	14%	7%	23%	7%
Less trustworthy	30%	48%	13%	28%
Staying the same	42%	34%	50%	46%
Unsure	14%	11%	14%	19%

The most striking finding is the trajectory on 2026 expectations. Pennsylvania is the only state in this dataset where voter expectation of widespread, results-altering fraud in the 2026 election, matches retrospective 2020 fraud belief (25%). Democrats and Independents are driving the increased worry, not Republicans, whose concerns were already high. Voters are more pessimistic about 2026 than about either prior cycle: only 29% expect no significant issues, down from 46% for 2024 and 40% for 2020.

The Reform Mandate

Voters want fixes, not a revolution: 60% say the system needs major (23%) or some (37%) changes, while 34% say it works well as it is. Voters are inclined to believe there are problems and open to fixing them, without concluding the system is irredeemably broken.

PA voters want state-led reform, not federal intervention: By a 62–25 margin, Pennsylvania voters say states should set and run their own elections, with federal agencies playing only a limited oversight role. Even as voters express frustration with how elections are administered, they are not inviting Washington to take over. This finding holds true among voters who want significant changes to the current system.

Voter ID has majority support across party lines: 54% support a universal government-issued ID requirement, including when voting by mail. Even Independents back it 48–40. Governor Shapiro's anticipated opposition is a political liability. Overall, 43% say they would view him less favorably for opposing voter ID, versus just 22% more favorably (net –21). Among swing voters, the damage is severe: 52% less favorable versus just 7% more favorable.

Pre-canvassing is the easiest reform to pass: 51% support allowing counties to pre-canvass mail ballots before Election Day, with only 25% opposed (net +26). Democrats back it 69–10 (net +59), and Independents support it by 21 points. Republicans are the only net-negative group (34–40), but the speed framing, faster results on election night, is the entry point to convince them.

Mail-in voting has no persuadable middle: 87% of Democrats call it convenient and secure, while 82% of Republicans call it a door to fraud. Messaging on this issue must be audience-specific, as a universal frame alienates one side regardless of how it is worded. On county-level consistency, 86% say it is important that election rules be applied the same way in every Pennsylvania county, a near-universal sentiment that crosses all party lines and provides a unifying frame for rule-of-law reform arguments.

__Methodology__: This probabilistic survey was conducted March 18–20, 2026, with 600 likely 2026 general election voters. It has a margin of error of ±4.00%. Known registered voters were interviewed via live phones and SMS. This survey was weighted to a likely general election voter universe.