



*Fighting for Voting Rights and a Democratic United States*

## **DEMOCRATIC LAW BRIEFS**

A Publication of the DC Chapter of the National Lawyers Council  
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**WELCOME TO DEMOCRATIC LAW BRIEFS**, the official newsletter of the DC Chapter of the National Lawyers Council. If you would like to be on our mailing list, please sign up at <http://www.democraticlawyers.org/join.php> or e-mail your name, title, company, addresses, and phone numbers to [signup @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:signup@democraticlawyers.org). We'll happily add you to the list.

### **VETERANS DAY**

President Woodrow Wilson first proclaimed an Armistice Day for November 12, 1919. The United States Congress passed a concurrent resolution seven years later on June 4, 1926, requesting the President issue another proclamation to observe November 11 with appropriate ceremonies. An Act (52 Stat. 351; 5 U. S. Code, Sec. 87a) approved May 13, 1938, made the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday; "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as 'Armistice Day'." World War I ended on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour in 1918.

In 1953, an Emporia, Kansas shoe store owner named Al King had the idea to expand Armistice Day to celebrate all veterans, not just those who served in World War I. King had been actively involved with the American War Dads during World War II. He began a campaign to turn Armistice Day into "All" Veterans Day. The Emporia Chamber of Commerce took up the cause after determining that 90 percent of Emporia merchants as well as the Board of Education supported closing their doors on November 11, 1953 to honor veterans. With the help of then-U.S. Rep. Ed Rees, also from Emporia, a bill for the holiday was pushed through Congress. President Dwight Eisenhower signed it into law on May 26, 1954.

Congress amended this act on November 8, 1954, replacing "Armistice" with Veterans, and it has been known as Veterans Day since.

# VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

## ACORN PREVAILS IN PA

**Harrisburg, PA** - Two lawsuits, one attempting to restrict voters' attire and one in which the GOP attempted to force ACORN to turn over its list of Pennsylvania registered voters, were defeated in state court Oct. 30. In the suit against ACORN, state GOP officials had filed a preliminary injunction against the community group, attempting to get the state to force ACORN to turn over its list of voters it has registered and seeking to order the group to pay for public service announcements reminding first-time voters that they must bring identification to the polls. Read about the lawsuit here:

<http://www.acorn.org/>

## EARLY VOTING

**National** - For vast swaths of Americans, election day has already come and gone thanks to a record level of early voting -- a big transformation of the way Americans exercise their most fundamental right as citizens. In three swing states -- North Carolina, New Mexico and Colorado -- the number of voters who have already cast their ballots has reached more than 70% of the number who voted there in 2004. That may represent the beginning of a tidal wave of voting participation that could match or break a record set a century ago, when two-thirds of eligible voters went to the polls for the 1908 presidential election. Read more here:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/washingtondc/la-na-voting4-2008nov04,0,3938169.story>

## PUSH TO EXPAND VOTING

**National** - "A system of automatic registration, in which the government bears more of the responsibility for assembling accurate and secure lists of eligible voters, is a necessary reform," states Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York, who is working on legislation intended to overhaul how eligible voters register. "All eligible Americans should be able to cast their ballot without barriers and the registration problems we saw on Tuesday [November 4, 2008] and during the weeks that preceded Election Day make clear that the system needs improvement." Lawyers from the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law and other voting rights groups are working with Sen. Clinton on her legislation. Read the story here:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/us/politics/07voting.html?\\_r=3&hp&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/us/politics/07voting.html?_r=3&hp&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)

## DC DLC BRAIN TEASERS

DC DLC BRAIN TEASERS - Each week we have a puzzle or a brain teaser or a trivia question for you to answer. You can e-mail your answers to [editors@democraticlawyers.org](mailto:editors@democraticlawyers.org). Please put "Brain Teaser" in the subject line. We will run the names of all those who get the right/best answer in the following issue.

### THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Who was the presidential candidate of the Peoples Party in 1972?

### LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

When did Congress select a uniform date on which the states were to choose their Electors?

### ANSWER

A uniform national date for presidential elections was not set until 1845, although Congress always had constitutional authority to do so (The First Tuesday following the first Monday in November in years divisible by four). We had a correct answer from Kevin Kingston. Congratulations Kevin. Good luck this week.

## WHO ARE WE?

The DC Democratic Lawyers Council (DC DLC) is a group of Democratic lawyers, affiliated with the National Lawyers Council of the Democratic National Committee, volunteering their legal skills to strengthen the democratic process. We work to ensure that every eligible citizen is allowed to vote and that every vote cast in every election is counted. The DC DLC was formed out of a concern that voting rights are increasingly under attack in our country and an understanding that now is the time to put the skills of Democratic attorneys to work to ensure that every citizen's right to vote will be upheld in future elections. Our activities include advocating for better laws and regulations and initiating litigation when necessary to guarantee the fairness of and the widest participation in the U.S. electoral process.

The Democratic Lawyers Council was founded by attorneys who have served on the front line of election law for the Democratic Party in numerous elections, including

most recently, the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. The lesson learned from the recount debacle was that post-election day litigation will hardly ever fix any election injustice. Given that, many of the recount lawyers, particularly those based in Florida, engineered a comprehensive voter protection program to confront and deal with voter and election issues before Election Day. One aspect of this effort was the recruitment of 3200 lawyers who, after receiving specialized election law and procedures training, worked inside the polls in key precincts in Florida on Election Day to assure that every citizen who showed up to vote, was able to do so.

Our mission statement is simple:

We are a coalition of lawyers and others dedicated to fostering universal participation and trust in the electoral process by ensuring that:

- All eligible persons can register to vote easily;
- All registered voters are able to vote simply, fairly, and without intimidation; and
- All votes are counted accurately and all voting systems are open and reliable.

We encourage you to send us an e-mail if you would like more information or are interested in becoming a part of our organization.

Please e-mail us at [erika@democraticlawyers.org](mailto:erika@democraticlawyers.org).

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## COMMITTEES

We are a volunteer-driven and volunteer-dependent organization. Please lend your time, talents, and effort to helping to solve important voting rights issues. Please click on <http://www.democraticlawyers.org/join.php> and sign up for our committees, which include:

### **DC Community Outreach Committee**

*Co-Chairs*, David Goldblatt ([david @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:david@democraticlawyers.org)), Curtis LeGeyt ([curtis @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:curtis@democraticlawyers.org)) & Candice Jones ([candice @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:candice@democraticlawyers.org))

This committee is responsible for working with community leaders and Democratic elected officials in the District of Columbia on important voting rights initiatives.

### **Building the National Lawyers Council Committee**

*Chair*, Rita Aguilar ([rita @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:rita@democraticlawyers.org))

This committee is responsible for working with the National Lawyers Council to build chapters throughout the country, as well as developing “model” chapter and voting rights materials.

### **Federal Legislation Committee**

*Chair*, Dick Meltzer ([dick @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:dick@democraticlawyers.org))

This committee is responsible for monitoring federal election law activity, e.g., HAVA and UOCAVA, educating membership and helping push for voting rights reform at the federal level.

### **Redistricting & Voting Rights Act Committee**

*Chair, Jeff Wice ([jmwice @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:jmwice@democraticlawyers.org))*

This committee is responsible for preparing Democrats for the next redistricting cycle (2010), e.g., reviewing case law from the 2000 cycle, and monitoring Voting Rights Act developments.

### **Ex-Felon Voting Rights Committee**

*Chair, John Shuman ([john @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:john@democraticlawyers.org))*

This committee is responsible for helping non-incarcerated ex-offenders secure a right to vote in federal elections, e.g., congressional outreach, to encourage successful re-entry of these citizens.

### **Events Committee**

*Chair, Jordan Usdan ([jordan @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:jordan@democraticlawyers.org))*

This committee is responsible for organizing year-round activities. These can include professional networking opportunities, guest speaker events, assisting with National Lawyers Council events, and other social and political activities.

In addition, please consider participating in leadership positions and organizational committees, which include:

- Steering Committee
- Event Planning
- Recruiting and Publicity
- Election/Campaign Finance Law Compliance
- Democratic Party/Candidate Outreach
- Fundraising

### **READING SOMEONE ELSE'S COPY???**

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### **GOT NEWS?**

If you have news for Democratic Law Briefs, we'd love to get it. E-mail your news, ideas, rumors and thoughts to Paul Roath and Arielle Harry-Bess at [editors @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:editors@democraticlawyers.org). We reserve the right to use, not use, edit, paraphrase, or otherwise play with your submissions.

\* \* \*

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