



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.

EVENTS

The official website of the Presidential Inaugural Committee is <http://www.pic2009.org/>. This website will list official events as they are organized and announced.

National Conference of State Societies inauguration events website:
<http://ncss.typepad.com/>

VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

MINNESOTA SENATE RACE

Minnesota – The Minnesota State Canvassing Board confirmed on Monday that Al Franken has won his Senate election, ending a weeks-long recount process that started with the Democratic challenger facing a roughly 215-vote deficit. Read more here:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/05/franken-officially-wins-e_n_155367.html

VOTING REFORM

Mississippi- The talk of voting reform is back at the state capitol. The legislature created an election reform review panel and its findings were issued through Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann's office in December. Details can be found here:
http://www.wlbt.com/Global/story.asp?S=9608631&nav=menu119_2

VOTING MACHINES

Tennessee -The "Tennessee Voter Confidence Act," which took effect Thursday, requires new voting machines that will create a paper trail for use in recounts or random spot checks. Any new voting machines purchased after Jan. 1 must be in compliance, and all machines must be in compliance by the November 2010 general election. Read the Act here:

<http://www.t-g.com/story/1490530.html>

BOSTON ELECTIONS

Boston, MA – The U.S. Justice Department will stop monitoring Boston's elections three years after it sued the city for failing to accommodate voters with limited English skills, removing a layer of scrutiny of a department beset by criticism. Read more here:

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/01/01/us_ends_oversight_of_boston_elections/

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

Washington, DC - The Federal Election Commission (FEC) unanimously elected Steven T. Walther as Chairman and Matthew S. Petersen as Vice Chairman for 2009 in an open session on Thursday, Dec. 18, 2008. Mr. Walther and Mr. Petersen were both nominated to serve as Commissioners by President George W. Bush and both were unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate. Read the details here:

<http://www.fec.gov/press/press2008/20081219chairman.shtml>

PETITIONERS RIGHTS

Oklahoma City, OK - The 10th Circuit Court of Appeals on December 18, 2008 ruled that an Oklahoma law that bars nonresidents from circulating initiative petitions in the state is unconstitutional and reversed a lower court that had upheld the statute. In a 16-page decision, a three-judge panel of the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver overturned the ruling by Senior U.S. District Judge Tim Leonard in Oklahoma City and sent the case back to him for more hearings. Read the details here:

http://www.edmondsun.com/local/local_story_353233140.html

GEORGIA VOTER REGISTRATION

GEORGIA - The U.S. Justice Department says it needs more information on Georgia's voter registration verification process before it can decide whether it complies with the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In a Dec. 15 letter to the state Attorney General's

Office, Christopher Coates, chief of the voting section in the Civil Rights Division, said information provided so far by the state was insufficient. Details can be found here: http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2008/12/17/georgia_voting_law.html

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. 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

The Twentieth Amendment affected this event and which President first?

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

What important formal vote occurred today, December 15?

ANSWER

On December 15, 2008, the Electoral College Electors met in their various States to select the President and Vice President of the United States. The electors signed, sealed and certified packages of electoral votes and immediately sent one set of votes to the President of the Senate (Richard B. Cheney) and two sets to the Archivist. In other words the Electoral College officially voted Obama as President. We had a correct answer from Phil Goldberg. Congratulations Phil! 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).

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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