



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.

VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

MINNESOTA SENATE RACE

Minnesota - Democratic candidate Al Franken (DFL) made a bid Wednesday to short-circuit the court case that's intended to give Minnesota a winner in its closely contested Senate race. Attorneys for Franken argued that a state court should dismiss the lawsuit filed by Republican Norm Coleman (R) because the three-judge panel designated to hear the case lacks jurisdiction for Coleman's type of complaint. The proper venue, Franken's attorneys argued, is the U.S. Senate, which has the power to judge the election of its members. Read more here:

<http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?docid=news-000003014318>

VOTING EXPERIENCE

National - Thanks to rise of early voting, going to polls has become easier for many citizens, and a new analysis examines the demographics of who votes early, and why they do so. Overseas military voters, on the other hand, have been experiencing significant difficulty in voting, and a new study highlights the specific challenges they face and recommends reforms. Read the study here:

<http://www.electionreformproject.org/?emc=lm&m=221449&l=21&v=731145>

VOTING EXPERIENCE SURVEY

National - Despite problems at the polls in 2000 and 2004, and fears that they would reoccur in the last election, the vast majority of Americans said they had a positive voting experience in 2008. Even more strikingly, citizens expressed strong enthusiasm about being engaged in their communities, according to a *Public Agenda* survey of

voters conducted immediately following the presidential election. Read the survey here:

<http://www.publicagenda.org/reports/the-voting-experience>

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

New York, NY - In a *New York Times* editorial, the Voting Rights Act challenge before the Supreme Court is discussed. In the editorial, the *NY Times* calls the act constitutional and still needed. The *Times* also argues that if the Court strikes down the Act it would be “breaking radically with its own precedents”. The *Times* further states the overturning the act would be “an extreme case of conservative judicial activism, since the 14th and 15th Amendments expressly authorize Congress to enact laws of this sort to prevent discrimination in voting.” Read the editorial here:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/25/opinion/25sun1.html?_r=1&ref=opinion

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

True or false? According to the Constitution, the Presidential Oath must be administered by the Chief Justice of the US?

Extra points: Which Chief Justice swore in the most Presidents?

LAST WEEK’S QUESTION

Name three ways that President-elect Obama inauguration is attempting to honor the last President from Illinois?

ANSWER

Obama attempted to honor Abe Lincoln by retracing Lincoln’s train trip from Philly to D.C., by the use of the Lincoln bible, by the same inauguration dinner menu, by eating the dinner off china that were replicas of those ordered by Mary Todd Lincoln and the theme of the Inauguration (“A New Birth of Freedom”). We had a correct answer from Scott Claffee. Congratulations Scott. 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), Curtis LeGeyst (curtis@democraticlawyers.org) & Candice Jones (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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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

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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. We reserve the right to use, not use, edit, paraphrase, or otherwise play with your submissions.

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