



*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**

### **VOTER IDENTIFICATION**

**Jackson MS** - Voter-ID legislation continues to cause anguished debate and sharp political division that are wearing out Mississippi lawmakers. Read the story here: <http://www.cdispatch.com/news/article.asp?aid=177>

**Georgia** - According to the state of Georgia, Arthur Remillard does not exist. The 75-year-old Massachusetts native just can't seem to prove his existence. Delivered by a midwife in 1933 and later adopted, Remillard has no birth certificate. As a result, Remillard cannot get a driver's license or vote, two things he said he has done all his life. Following the state's controversial decision last year to require state-issued photo identification to vote, a recent bill proposed at the Capitol would ask people to present proof of citizenship to register to vote. That proof could include a birth certificate, passport, naturalization papers or a driver's license – provided you showed proper proof of citizenship to get it. Remillard said since he moved to Braselton in 2004, he has not been able to obtain a driver's license, which has caused him many hardships. Read the details here: <http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/news/article/14433/>

**Oklahoma City, OK** - Legislation that would require Oklahomans to provide proof of identify before voting has won approval in a state House committee. The measure by state Rep. Sue Tibbs of Tulsa would require voters to establish their identity with a document containing a photograph of the voter from a state, federal, county, municipal or tribal government. Read more here: <http://www.kswo.com/Global/story.asp?S=9790730>

## VOTER ROLLS

**Jackson, MS-** The Mississippi Senate has passed a bill giving the secretary of state the authority to purge voter rolls in some counties. Under the bill approved Thursday, the secretary of state every four years will compile a list of counties that have more registered voters than voting age population. The four counties with the most disproportionate rolls will be asked to update the list. If they don't do it adequately within a year's time, the secretary of state will take over the task. Read the bill here: [http://www.wxvt.com/Global/story.asp?S=9795329&nav=menu1344\\_2](http://www.wxvt.com/Global/story.asp?S=9795329&nav=menu1344_2)

## PAPER BALLOTS

**Nashville, TN-** Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett says he's researching the fiscal impact new voting machines will have on Tennessee counties after complaints they may be burdened with extra costs. The new optical-scan machines are required under a new state law meant to create a paper trail in case of voting irregularities. The complete story here: <http://www.waaytv.com/Global/story.asp?S=9802081>

## EARLY VOTING

**Annapolis, MD -** Sen. Roy Dyson will be sponsoring legislation to implement early voting in Maryland. Voters ratified a constitutional amendment in November to authorize the General Assembly to enact early voting legislation. Read the [http://www.wboc.com/Global/story.asp?S=9789264&nav=menu222\\_6](http://www.wboc.com/Global/story.asp?S=9789264&nav=menu222_6)

## MINNESOTA SENATE RACE

**St. Paul, MN -** The judges in Minnesota's Senate election trial threw Republican Norm Coleman a lifeline on Tuesday, opening the door to adding nearly 5,000 rejected absentee ballots to a race that Democrat Al Franken leads by just 225 votes. It wasn't a total victory for Coleman, who had wanted the judges to look at about 11,000 such ballots. He also has to prove the absentees were unfairly rejected, and it's likely that Franken would gain votes from the pile too. But his attorneys had said the absentees were the centerpiece of his court challenge, and they cheered the ruling. Read more here: <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/03/minnesota-judges-gives-coleman-election-challenge-a-boost/>

**Minneapolis, MN -** Mean while, an editorial in the *Star-Tribune* asks how long will the recount (and trial) take. Read the editorial here: [http://www.startribune.com/politics/national/senate/39205262.html?elr=KArksi8cyaiUjc8LDyiUiD3aPc:\\_Yyc:aUU](http://www.startribune.com/politics/national/senate/39205262.html?elr=KArksi8cyaiUjc8LDyiUiD3aPc:_Yyc:aUU)

## MILITARY ABSENTEE VOTING

**National** - As casting a ballot has become easier for many citizens thanks to convenience voting reforms like vote centers and early voting, it remains persistently difficult for overseas military voters. In a new analysis, the Election Reform Project's Jessica Leval lays out a set of proposals to make voting easier for this particular population, including simplifying the process and incorporating the Internet into procedures. Read the proposals here:

[http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.29247/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.29247/pub_detail.asp)

## 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

True or False? Every President has been sworn into office with a Bible.

### LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

When was the first time that the Presidential Oath administered by a woman?

### ANSWER

Lyndon Johnson was sworn into office by Sarah Hughes, a federal judge on board Air Force One in Dallas Texas, November 22, 1963. We had correct answers from Chris Drake, Lynda Mounts, Lois Schiffer and James Gibson. Congratulations to all of you!! 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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