



*Fighting for Voting Rights and a Democratic United States*

## **DEMOCRATIC LAW BRIEFS**

A Publication of the DC Chapter of the National Lawyers Council  
Volume 5 Issue 7 March 17, 2009

**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.

**Happy St. Patrick's Day!**  
**A bit o' green for the 'Patty'**

## **VOTING RIGHTS NEWS**

### **VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

**New York, NY** - In a *New York Times* editorial, the Supreme Court narrowing of the scope of the Voting Rights Act last week is decried. Calling the decision "regrettable," the editorial points out that the 5-to-4 ruling overturns two of the act's central goals: protecting minority voting rights and moving the nation toward a more colorblind future. Read the editorial here:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/11/opinion/11wed2.html?\\_r=1&ref=opinion](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/11/opinion/11wed2.html?_r=1&ref=opinion)

**Selma, AL** - Attorney General Eric Holder last week, and prior to the Bartlett described above, announced that defending the Voting Rights Act would be a priority of the Obama Administration. In Holder's words, "We must commit ourselves to continue to defend the Voting Rights Act that is under attack." Read the article here:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSTRE5271F620090308>

### **VOTER DISENFRANCHISEMENT**

**Washington, DC** -On March 11, 2009, New York Senator Chuck Schumer gavelled to order a hearing on a report estimating that as many as seven million voters were kept from casting ballots in November. "This report is beyond troubling," said Schumer, who is chairman of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee. "Put together,

you get massive disenfranchisement. This is unacceptable and undemocratic.” Read more here:

<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0309/19885.html>

## MINNESOTA SENATE RACE

**Minnesota** - Their failure of proof is simply breathtaking,” Kevin Hamilton, a lawyer for Mr. Franken, said during the closing arguments, responding to Mr. Coleman’s claims that some ballots had been improperly included in the recount. “There’s simply been no competent evidence of double-counting.” Lawyers for Norm Coleman, the Republican incumbent, and Al Franken, the Democratic challenger, gave closing statements on Friday the 13th in the seven-week trial in which Mr. Coleman contested the recount that ended with Mr. Franken ahead by 225 votes. Now, the three-judge panel hearing the case will deliberate, and may take days (or even weeks) to decide whether to uphold the results or set them aside as too flawed. Read more here:

<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/13/more-twists-in-the-endless-minnesota-senate-race/>

## PAPER TRAIL

**Trenton, NJ** - New Jersey Gov. Jon S. Corzine (D), citing the state’s “critical economic situation and lack of appropriate technology” signed a bill on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> signed into law a bill that delays a Jan 1 requirement that voting machines produce individual permanent paper records. Read the details here:

<http://www.govtech.com/gt/articles/625805>

## 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

The ninth President William H. Harrison is best remembered for having both the longest and shortest two things. What are they?

## LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

William Harrison was the first President to suffer from this Tecumseh curse. What was the curse?

## ANSWER

The Tecumseh curse was the death in office of every U.S. President elected in a year ending in a zero, from William Henry Harrison to John F. Kennedy. The curse was named after the defeated Tecumseh, the Shawnee chief, and his brother Tenskwatawa known as the Prophet in the 1811 Battle of Tippecanoe, in which W.H. Harrison took part. Supposedly, the Prophet set a curse against Harrison and future White House occupants who became president with the same end number as Harrison. The Presidents who fell victim to the curse were Harrison (1840), Lincoln (1860), Garfield (1880), McKinley (1900), Harding (1920), Franklin D. Roosevelt (1940), and John F. Kennedy (1960). Ronald Reagan (1980) survived John Hinckley Jr.'s assassination attempt, and it is said that Reagan broke the curse - as further evidenced by George W. Bush (2000) lasting all eight years in office (debatable, though - you might say Bush was not actually elected, so his might not count!). We had correct answers from Andrew R. Bernstein, William Stephens, Cara Huang and Chris Drake. 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 @](mailto:editors@democraticlawyers.org)

[democraticlawyers.org](http://democraticlawyers.org). We reserve the right to use, not use, edit, paraphrase, or otherwise play with your submissions.

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Democratic Law Briefs, E-Mail Edition, Volume 5 Number 8

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