



*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**

### **ELECTRONIC VOTING**

WASHINGTON, DC- The CIA, which has been monitoring foreign countries' use of electronic voting systems, has reported apparent vote-rigging schemes in Venezuela, Macedonia and Ukraine and a raft of concerns about the machines' vulnerability to tampering. Appearing last month before a U.S. Election Assistance Commission field hearing in Orlando, Fla., a CIA cybersecurity expert suggested that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and his allies fixed a 2004 election recount, an assertion that could further roil U.S. relations with the Latin leader. In a presentation that could provide disturbing lessons for the United States, where electronic voting is becoming universal, Steve Stigall summarized what he described as attempts to use computers to undermine democratic elections in developing nations. His remarks have received no news media attention until now. More here:

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics/AP/story/965748.html>

### **MILITARY VOTING**

WASHINGTON, DC - One day after the Justice Department filed suit against the state of New York over the counting of military absentee ballots in next week's special election, it announced an agreement with state officials that would extend the deadline for those voters to mid-April. The department's lawsuit against the state and Gov. David Paterson, filed in federal district court yesterday, charged that nine of the 10 counties in New York's 20th congressional district had not given military voters enough time to fill out their ballots and return them before the deadline. The original deadline – seven days after the election – will be extended by another six days if the agreement is approved in federal court. Read the details here:

<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2009/03/26/doj-reaches-agreement-with-ny-over-military-ballots/>

## VOTING MACHINES

**Washington, D.C.** - U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), Chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, has asked the Senate Budget Committee for \$470 million in previously allocated funds to help states pay for the new statewide voter lists and better voting machines they are mandated to provide under the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Read more here:

[http://schumer.senate.gov/new\\_website/record.cfm?id=310091](http://schumer.senate.gov/new_website/record.cfm?id=310091)

## INTERNET REGISTRATION

**Denver, CO** - Colorado House bill 1160 would greatly expand voters' ability to make use of the internet. Under the bill, citizens could log on and register to vote, request a mail in ballot or change their voting address. The bill passed the House 60-4 on Monday. State Rep. Cory Gardner, one of four Republicans to oppose the bill, said he voted no over concerns about system security and the possibility of voter fraud. If passed, Colorado would join Arizona and Washington State in allowing on-line registration. Details here:

[http://www.denverpost.com/politics/ci\\_11981405](http://www.denverpost.com/politics/ci_11981405)

## EARLY VOTING

**Maryland** - The House of Delegates voted Saturday to bring early voting to Maryland in legislation spurred by a constitutional amendment that state residents approved in November. <http://wjz.com/local/early.voting.2.970469.html>

**Missouri** - The state's top election official is pushing to allow people to vote weeks before Election Day. But some Republican lawmakers say early voting won't happen unless Democrats compromise on a proposal to require a state-issued photo identification to vote. <http://www.bnd.com/336/story/708755.html>

## NON-CITIZEN VOTING BILL

**Maine** - The sponsor of a bill that would allow non-U.S. citizens to vote in municipal elections said he is confident his proposal is constitutional. Sen. Justin Alford (D-Portland), said he is getting both positive and negative response to his proposal, and said those who contend that the Maine Constitution would block the measure are incorrect. The bill, LD 1195, is aimed at allowing non-citizen immigrants to vote on local issues. Proponents say the measure would lead immigrants to become more

active in their communities, giving them more incentive to pursue U.S. citizenship.  
<http://morningsentinel.maintoday.com/news/local/6126472.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](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

This president became the sworn enemy of the United States after leaving office.  
Who was this President?

### LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Who was the first woman to run for the office of the president of the United States?

### ANSWER

Victoria Claflin Woodhull was nominated for President of the United States by the Equal Rights Party, a coalition of labor organizers, women's advocates and others, which she founded. We had correct answers from William Stephens and 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).

## 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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