



Fighting for Voting Rights and a Democratic United States

DEMOCRATIC LAW BRIEFS

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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

New York, NY - In a *New York Times* editorial, the Minnesota Senate Race was discussed. The editorial pointed out that special three-judge state panel did not mince words this week when it declared Al Franken (D) the clear winner over Norm Coleman (R) in Minnesota's fiercely-disputed United States Senate race. The ringing three-judge ruling against Mr. Coleman was good enough for Joe Scarborough; the former Republican congressman and garrulous host on MSNBC. "Morning Joe" urged Mr. Coleman to think of the right of Minnesota voters to a full presence in the Capitol and give it up: "It's over, Norm. O.K.?" Read the editorial here:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/16/opinion/16thu4.html?_r=1&ref=opinion

Minneapolis, MN - Lawyers for Republican Norm Coleman have filed notice to appeal his election-lawsuit loss to Democrat Al Franken. They filed a notice of appeal Monday afternoon with the Minnesota Supreme Court. The effort will seek to overturn a decision by a special three-judge panel that Franken came out 312 votes ahead of Coleman in the November election. The former senator contends that local officials used inconsistent standards for deciding whether voters complied with absentee ballot rules. The panel ruled last week that local officials used reasonable latitude in running the election, and that equal protection under the law doesn't require "rigid sameness." Read the details here:

http://www.twincities.com/allheadlines/ci_12184918

FLORIDA VOTING RULES OVERHAUL

Tallahassee, FL – Republican lawmakers, who control both houses of the Legislature, have proposed sweeping changes to the state’s election laws, including new procedures on registering voters, and requiring voters to use a provisional ballot if they move shortly before an election. Read more here:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/16/us/16florida.html?_r=1&emc=eta1

INTERNET VOTING

Alabama - The Alabama House on Thursday passed a bill that would allow some Alabama citizens overseas to cast their ballots over secure Internet connections. The bill would change the way voters overseas request ballots and cast their votes, including military personnel fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Read the details here:

<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/article/20090417/NEWS02/904170327/1009>

VOTER DISCRIMINATION LAW

Texas – The U.S. Supreme Court is set to hear an Austin case challenging a federal voter discrimination law. Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act requires any state with a history of discriminating against minority voters to get federal approval for any election changes. Read more here:

<http://www.news8austin.com/content/headlines/?ArID=238306&SecID=2>

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

What president could have bought Cuba but didn’t because Congress refused to let him have the money? Bonus: Why did Congress refuse to provide the money?

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Many Presidents kept unusual pets in the White House. What President kept a pet alligator?

ANSWER

John Quincy Adams owned a pet alligator which he kept in the East Room of the White House. We did not have any correct answers last week. 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)

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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