



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.

EVENTS

"FIRST 100 DAYS" GRASSROOTS CELEBRATION

Come celebrate President Obama's first 100 days in office with YLFO, DC for Obama, Generation Obama, Foreign Policy Professionals for Obama, and other local groups. We have several great speakers lined up and will also be watching the President's press conference at 8 p.m. Please note the VENUE CHANGE to a larger space.

Who: Organizing for America (OFA 2.0)

When: Wednesday, April 29th, 6:30-9 p.m. (speaker program at 7:30 p.m.)

Where: Capitol Lounge, 229 Pennsylvania Ave. SE (Capitol South Metro)

Speakers: Jeremy Bird, Deputy Director, Organizing for America
Betsy Hoover, Organizing For America's Regional Director
Tom Manatos, Youth Outreach Advisor to Speaker Pelosi
Rod Snyder, Young Democrats of America's Mid-Atlantic Director

RSVP online at

<http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=cjVaTjIKNXY4R2I0V3hYd0h4Tlc2ZFE6MA>

WIN WOMEN OF COLOR RECEPTION

The Women's Information network is kicking off its May 2000 Week of WIN with a reception in honor of WIN's Women of Color. All members and non-members are invited to attend.

- Who:** Women's Information Network
- What:** Reception in Honor of WIN's Women of Color with Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-NY-11)
- When:** Thursday, May 14, 6:30 p.m.
- Where:** Evolve Restaurant and Lounge (in Adams Morgan)
1871 Columbia Road, NW

RSVP to woc@winonline.org

VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

COUNT TO 59...

Sen. Specter Will Switch to Democratic Party

...60...MINNESOTA SENATE RACE

Twin Cities, MN - According to the Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, nearly two-thirds of the 1,042 adults surveyed believe Norm Coleman should concede the race. A separate poll by the Alliance for a Better Minnesota shows about two-thirds of the 600 people polled believe the recount process was "fair, impartial, accurate, and carried out according to Minnesota law. Read more here:

<http://www.wdio.com/article/stories/S899932.shtml?cat=10335>

ST. PAUL, Minn. - Minnesota will head into the summer months without a second U.S. senator under the Supreme Court's schedule for hearing Republican Norm Coleman's appeal. The court said Friday that it wouldn't hold oral arguments until June 1. It's later than Democrat Al Franken had hoped. In the meantime, the two sides will file their briefs. Read the details here:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124058453415953017.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

NEW YORK 20TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

New York - Scott Murphy (D) has won the up-state race to replace now-Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D) in the U.S. House of Representatives. Nearly a month after a tight Congressional election in upstate New York ended with uncertainty, the Republican conceded defeat on Friday in a race that had drawn national interest. Despite a 71,000 Republican advantage in registration, Murphy managed to win by, at last count, a margin of 399 votes. Read more here:

<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/24/murphy-wins-upstate-house-seat/?hp>.

EX-FELON VOTING

Evert, WA - Both houses of the Washington State Legislature have passed bills that would restore voting rights to convicted felons who have served their sentences but have not yet finished paying fines or restitution. The bills do contain a compromise provision by which victims, county auditors and prosecutors can petition for a revocation of voting rights if a person misses three payments in a 12 month period. Read the details here:

<http://heraldnet.com/article/20090422/BLOG13/904229951/0/NEWS02>

VOTER ID

Nashville, TN - Legislation approved by the state Senate last week requiring government-issue photo identification cards to vote in Tennessee apparently failed in a House subcommittee Wednesday. The chairman of the House elections subcommittee, Rep. Eddie Yokley (D-Greeneville), declared the bill had failed after the panel deadlocked 3-3 on an amendment that would have made it identical to the version that passed the Senate on April 13. Read more here:

<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2009/apr/22/bill-requiring-photo-ids-voters-appears-dead/>

MILITARY VOTING BILL

Montgomery, AL -A bill to expand military and overseas voting for Alabamians has just one legislative hurdle left. The bill, HB711, was unanimously reported out of the Senate's Constitution, Campaign Finance, Ethics, and Elections committee today. Read the details here:

<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/article/20090423/NEWS/90423057>

ELECTION REFORM BILLS

St. Paul, MN - A collection of election reform bills has been moving slowly and somewhat quietly through the Minnesota House and Senate. Together, the pieces of legislation, if passed, would fundamentally change the way Minnesotans vote and the state's election system operates. For more on these reform bills go here:

http://www.minnpost.com/stories/2009/04/23/8285/election_reform_bills_quietly_advancing_that_would_let_minnesota_catch_up_with_much_of_nation

VOTING RIGHTS LAWSUIT

Austin, TX - This Wednesday, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments in a case from that could redefine the Voting Rights Act of 1965, landmark legislation that outlawed decades of ballot-box discrimination against minorities. Details here:

<http://www.statesman.com/news/content/news/stories/local/04/26/0426mud.html>

VOTER IDENTIFICATION

Tallahassee, FL - A House council hurriedly passed a sweeping rewrite of Florida election laws Friday. Like a similar Senate version, the House bill would ban two forms of voter ID at the polls now used mainly by older voters and require paid ballot-initiative circulators to register with the state. Details on the rewrite can be found here:

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/legislature/article993043.ece>

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

Which President was the first "U.S." citizen?

LAST 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?

ANSWER

In 1853, James Buchanan was appointed ambassador to England by President Franklin Pierce. While on this mission, in order to win Southern support for his nomination in 1856 he helped draft the Ostend Manifesto, which called for United States acquisition of Cuba, by force of arms if necessary. The Pierce administration proposed to purchase Cuba from Spain for \$120 million or take it from Spain if the offer were refused. This offer, or threat, by the US is known as the Ostend Manifesto. When the manifesto became public, the plan to purchase Cuba was scuttled when it denounced by Northerners in Congress as an attempt to expand slavery in the US forcing the Pierce administration to back away from the plan. We had a correct answer from Kevin Kingston who identified the Ostend Manifesto. 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

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

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