



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

HAPPY HOUR

Join YLFO and the National Democratic Law Students Council to celebrate obtaining 60 Democratic in the US Senate. Discussion on building support for the President's agenda with fellow Democratic Lawyers and law students from across the DC metro area.

Who: YLFO and the National Democratic Law Students Council

When: Thursday, August 6, from 5:30-8:30 PM

Where: James Hoban's (1 Dupont Circle).

RSVP: <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=108437267881&ref=ts>

YLFO STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

With the summer drawing to a close and the new year upon us, YLFO is going to be re-engaging lawyers and law students in a variety of efforts on behalf of the Administration and the Party, and will be planning a series of free events. Find out how you can get involved in what we're building: an ongoing organization of Democratic lawyers and law students.

Who: YLFO

When: Wednesday, August 12, 8 a.m.

Where : Corner Bakery at 14th and F Streets, NW

VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

HOUSE APPROVES VOTING ACT

Washington, DC - On this day in 1965, the House approved the Voting Rights Act by a 328-74 vote. The bill outlawed literacy tests and poll taxes as a means of assessing whether anyone was fit or unfit to vote. It also allowed the Justice Department to send federal examiners to voting districts where registration lagged and granted the attorney general broad powers to supervise practices in affected areas. On March 15, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson told a joint session of Congress, "Rarely are we met with a challenge ... to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved Nation. The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such as an issue ... the command of the Constitution is plain. It is wrong – deadly wrong – to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country." Read history here:

<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0809/25714.html>

REGISTERING LOW-INCOME VOTERS: A CASE STUDY

Washington, DC – Project Vote's newly released report, [Registering Low-Income Voters through Public Assistance Agencies in Missouri](#), shows just how well this NVRA program can work. Missouri went from having one of the worst public agency registration rates in the nation to having one of the best through the work of the [Public Agency Voter Registration Project](#), a coalition of voting rights groups to bring states into compliance with the public agency registration requirements of the National Voter Registration Act. This new case study explains how success was achieved, from the first surveys to document the poor performance of Missouri public agencies, through the court order that compelled compliance in July 2008, all the way through to last month's successful settlement of the lawsuit. As a result of this work, public assistance agencies in the state of Missouri went from collecting fewer than 8,000 applications a year to collecting over 100,000 applications in just eight months. Read the case study here:

<http://www.projectvote.org/images/publications/NVRA/Missouri%20Case%20Study%20FINAL.pdf>

VOTING RIGHTS GROUPS FILES SUIT TO FORCE STATES TO REGISTER LOW INCOME VOTERS

Washington, DC - Enfranchising America's least represented citizens is as simple as following the law: that's the message Project Vote and a coalition of voting rights groups sent as they filed lawsuits against Indiana and New Mexico earlier this month for failing to comply with the

National Voter Registration Act. Under a key provision of the NVRA, most states are required to provide voter registration opportunities to the millions of low-income Americans who apply for or use public assistance programs such as Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or Medicaid. Project Vote estimates that full implementation of this law could improve lagging voter registration rates among low-income citizens by two to three million new voters per year nationwide.

Unfortunately, compliance with the NVRA since its inception in 1993 has been spotty at best, non-existent at worst, leaving third-party groups with the hefty responsibility of picking up the slack by conducting expensive registration drives in disenfranchised communities. The coalition believes it is time for government to be doing its job of registering its citizens, and to start by properly implementing and enforcing the NVRA. The latest offenders under this federal law include the states of New Mexico and Indiana, both of which are being sued for denying hundreds of thousands of residents the opportunity to register to vote. Read more on this story here:

http://www.projectvoteblog.org/265/?tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=3364&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=263&cHash=683f3c09d2

ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION

Washington, DC - In a *Washington Post* editorial, the Omnibus Election Reform Act of 2009 is discussed. The Act aims to give more D.C. residents the opportunity to vote by allowing Election Day voter registration and eliminating restrictions on absentee and early voting. After noting that DC voting participation is below the national average the editorial calls on the DC Council to adopt the bill. Read the editorial here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/26/AR2009072602194.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

How many men have served on the Supreme Court?

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

What year was the 4th of July declared a legal holiday?

ANSWER

The 4th of July was declared a legal holiday in 1941.

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).

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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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