



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

ELECTION BILL PASSED

Columbus, OH - The Ohio House passed a bill on November 18, 2009 over Republican objections to make sweeping changes to how elections are run in the state, including expanding the number of sites where voters can cast early absentee ballots. But the bill, which the Democrat-controlled House passed 52-46 along party lines, now faces an uncertain future in the GOP-led Senate. Read the details here:

http://www.dispatchpolitics.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2009/11/19/copy/election_bill.ART_ART_11-19-09_B1_8KFNMBB.html?adsec=politics&sid=101

INSTANT RUN-OFF BILL

Albany, NY - The New York Senate Elections Committee heard testimony on proposals intended to continue to explore and improve the voting process and procedures in New York. The hearing addressed the effectiveness of election administration during the 2009 election cycle, the pilot program for optical scan voting machines and proposals to eliminate wasteful and expensive primary runoffs. The Elections Committee also heard testimony on legislation intended to improve the voting process going forward. Legislation sponsored by Elections Committee Chair, Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr., and Senator Bill Perkins (S6248) would eliminate runoff elections in New York City and elsewhere. This year, less than eight percent of registered Democrats, and less than three percent of New York City residents, voted in the primary runoff elections. The cost to taxpayers was \$15 million. For more on this story go here:

<http://www.empirestatenews.net/News/20091114-1.html>

GERRYMANDERING ISSUES

Tampa Bay, FL- In a *St. Petersburg Times Editorial*, the editors ask “What are incumbent state lawmakers afraid of? Could it be ... competition?” The Times points out that there are some 700,000 more registered Democrats than Republicans in Florida, but Republicans dominate the Legislature because of the overtly partisan way legislative districts are drawn. The *Times* indicates lack of interparty competition is not limited to Florida. Nationwide in 2008, roughly 40 percent of the 5,773 regularly scheduled partisan legislative contests had only one major party candidate on the ballot. On the other hand the *Times* claims that the worse is in Florida. To read the editorial go here:

<http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/columns/article1054593.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

Who was the one defeated V.P. candidate (i.e. was on a losing Presidential ticket) who later was elected President?

LAST WEEK’S QUESTION

Which President received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal?

ANSWER

The Navy and Marine Corps Medal, the second highest non-combatant medal awarded by the United States Department of the Navy to members of the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps was awarded to John F. Kennedy for his action as Commander of PT 109. We had a correct answer from Diana Kunkel. Congratulations Diana! 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).

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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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