Fighting for Voting Rights and a Democratic United States

DEMOCRATIC LAW BRIEFS

A Publication of the DC Chapter of the National Lawyers Council

Volume 5 Issue 17 May 12, 2009

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*. We'll happily add you to the list.

VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

MINNESOTA SENATE RACE

St. Paul, MN – Democrat Al Franken's attorneys filed their response to Republican Norm Coleman's appeal today calling on the Minnesota Supreme Court today to uphold a ruling that declared Franken the winner of Minnesota's long-running U.S. Senate race. Coleman has asked the court to order the three-judge panel that heard his election contest to count more rejected votes or say no one won the race. But Franken's attorneys say in most instances, Coleman either waived his rights to raise those arguments or simply failed to prove his case. Franken's attorneys are also asking the supreme court to order the Minnesota Secretary of State and Gov. Pawlenty to sign an election certificate once the justices rule. Read more here: *http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2009/05/11/franken_files_arguments_in_senate_recount_trial/*

HEARING ON MILITARY VOTING PROBLEMS

Washington, DC – The Senate will hold a hearing on the problems that the military and overseas voters experience. The hearing titled "Why many soldiers and their families can't vote will be held this Wednesday May 13th, starting at 10:00 am in the Russell Senate Office Building, Room 301. For additional information follow the link: *http://rules.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=CommitteeSchedule.Hearing&Hearing_id=4bbecb7a-f4b9-487b-a1e6-47065a293ccf*

VOTER REGISTRATION

South Carolina - Rep. Tricia Cotham (D), a former high school civics teacher, wants to make it easier for teens to register to vote. She is co-sponsoring a bill that would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote and encourage high schools to teach more about voting. Read about the bill here:
http://www.charlotteobserver.com/local/story/717275.html

Indiana - One of the election bills recently passed would allow people with valid driver's licenses or state identification to file voter registration forms over the Internet. Currently, citizens can download registration applications online, but they must print and mail the forms. Read the details here:
http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-in-xgr-electionlaws,0,5267248.story

E-MAIL VOTING

Kansas -The State Senate on Thursday followed the House in approving a bill that would allow soldiers and diplomats overseas to vote by e-mail. There is little to no opposition to the proposal to allow soldiers and other overseas federal employees to vote by e-mail. Those citizens can vote by fax now, but the bill recognizes that many of them, particularly in war zones, have more ready access to e-mail. An Associated Press survey found that for the 2008 election, 13 states allowed overseas federal employees to get their ballot by e-mail and seven allowed them to vote by that method. For more on this story go here:
http://www.kansas.com/news/state/story/804214.html

VOTER IDENTIFICATION

South Carolina - A Senate Judiciary subcommittee added early voting - which Democrats advocate as making voting easier and faster - to a voting ID bill roundly condemned by Democrats and civil rights groups as making it harder for elderly, disabled, poor and minority residents to vote. The amended House bill now heads to the full Senate Judiciary Committee. More information here:
http://www.heraldonline.com/120/story/1324130.html

Texas - Enacting a voter ID law is a legislative priority for the Republican Party of Texas, while Democrats consider the change a misguided attempt to drive down turnout. The House Elections Committee approved the Senate version of the voter ID bill, but committee chairman Todd Smith (R) said he doesn't think the measure has enough support on the House floor to pass. Read more here:
http://www.statesman.com/blogs/content/shared-gen/blogs/austin/firstreading/entries/2009/05/12/_house_is_in_at_12.html

EARLY BALLOTS

Minnesota - The Minnesota Senate has passed a proposal to permit voters to cast ballots early without an excuse. Now, an early voter must sign a document stating he or she will be out of town or otherwise unable to get to a polling place on Election Day. Under the proposal, voters could fill out a ballot four to 18 days before an election and feed it into a vote-counting machine. Details here: *http://wcco.com/politics/early.voting.minnesota.2.1005369.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*. 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 elected with a winning margin of a single electoral vote?

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

What President became addicted to cocaine?

ANSWER

Ten years after he was president, US Grant was stricken with throat cancer. He regularly swabbed his throat with cocaine, becoming addicted to it. Sorry but GW Bush was not the correct answer. We had a correct answer from 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.*

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*), Curtis LeGeyt (*curtis @ democraticlawyers.org*) & Candice Jones (*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*)
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*)
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*)
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*)
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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Democratic Law Briefs, E-Mail Edition, Volume 5 Number 17
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