



*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.

### **VOTING RIGHTS NEWS**

#### **MINNESOTA SENATE RACE**

**St. Paul, MN** - Former Senator Norm Coleman's (R) lawyers filed their final brief in the Republican's Supreme Court challenge Friday, but they chose not to address Al Franken's (D) request for a ruling that Governor Pawlenty (R) should give the winner a ticket to the Senate as soon as the court rules. "The court will do what the court does, and that's fine with us," said Ben Ginsberg, the Patton Boggs lawyer who's serving as the legal spokesman for the Coleman campaign. But by making no argument on the certification question, the Coleman camp has invited new questions about its end-game strategy: If he loses before the Minnesota Supreme Court, will he argue then that a certificate should not be issued? Would he ask the U.S. Supreme Court for an immediate injunction halting the certification process? Or is Coleman – in not opposing Franken's request – setting the stage to call. Read more here: <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0509/22639.html>

#### **MILITARY VOTING PROBLEMS**

**Washington, DC** - Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, released troubling new data Wednesday suggesting that during the 2008 presidential election, more than a quarter of the ballots requested by U.S. military personnel deployed overseas -- and other eligible voters living abroad -- went either uncollected or uncounted. "It is unacceptable that bureaucratic snafus could prevent our troops from exercising the very rights they are fighting to protect," Schumer said. "This data provides only a snapshot of the problem, but it is enough to show that the balloting process for service members is clearly in need of an overhaul. We have an obligation to make it easier, not harder, for our

military to cast their ballots when they are away on active-duty." More on this story here:

<http://yubanet.com/usa/Schumer-Releases-Survey-Suggesting-Ballots-of-One-in-Four-Troops-Deployed-Overseas-Went-Uncounted-in-08-Election.php>

## ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION

**Albany, NY** - State lawmakers are crafting a bill that may allow New Yorkers to both register and vote on the same day. The bill, championed by State Sen. Joe Addabbo (D-Howard Beach), chairman of the Senate Elections Committee, would amend the state's constitution and eliminate registration deadlines of up to 25 days before an election. "The presidential election energized a lot of first-time voters, but there were a lot of issues. People were turned away at the booths either because they were not registered or they were registered but their names were not in the book," Addabbo said. "We don't really want to turn people away from voting." Many voting rights advocates rank registration problems as among the most pervasive and discouraging hurdles for potential voters. "Far and away, voter registration problems were the No. 1 reason New Yorkers called the Election Protection hotline last year - contributing to 56 percent of our call volume," said Zoe Segal-Reichlin, a spokeswoman for Election Protection, a national voting-rights advocacy group. "Easing registration barriers, and in particular adopting Election Day Registration in New York State, would be a tremendous step forward." Reichlin said that more than 240,000 people, including 17,000 New Yorkers, issued complaints through Election Protection's national hotline in 2008. Addition details here:

<http://www.queenstribune.com/news/1242402137.html>

## VOTER PARTICIPATION

**National** - The Non-Profit Voter Engagement Network has released a report on 2008 voter turnout. The Report indicates that the 2008 Presidential election show a 62 percent voter turnout due in part to large increase of young voters as well as Black and Latino voters. Read the report here:

<http://www.nonprofitvote.org/>

## 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

Seven Presidents were born in a log cabin. Who was the last President to be born in a log cabin?

## LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Which President was elected with a winning margin of a single electoral vote?

## ANSWER

Rutherford B. Hayes was elected with the winning margin of one electoral vote. We did not have any correct answers last week. Good Luck this week.

## NEW LEGISLATION

**S. 1026:** A bill to amend the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act to improve procedures for the collection and delivery of marked absentee ballots of absent overseas uniformed service voters, and for other purposes.

**Sponsor:** *Sen Cornyn, John* [TX] (introduced 5/12/2009) *Cosponsors* (4)

**Committees:** Senate Rules and Administration

**Latest Major Action:** 5/12/2009 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

## 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

### **READING SOMEONE ELSE'S COPY???**

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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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