



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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HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

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.

HELP WANTED

DNC VOTER PROTECTION RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

This spring, the Democratic National Committee is looking for talented law students and recent graduates to join our Spring Research Fellowship program and pursue special projects in the Voter Protection Department at our Washington, D.C. headquarters.

The Voter Protection Department provides the DNC with guidance on voting rights and election administration issues, monitoring developments in state and federal election law and coordinating with the Party at the local and national levels to promote laws and policies that advance the right to vote.

Each fellow will conduct research on one or more voting rights issues. General research topics for the program include:

- Analyzing the effects of progressive voting reforms, such as early vote and same day registration
- Studying state compliance with federal election laws, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the National Voter Registration Act
- Determining the impact on registration and turnout of photo ID and citizenship verification laws

Fellowships begin on February 1st and conclude with a final presentation to DNC

leadership on May 21st. Participants will receive a \$3,500 stipend for the program.

To learn more and apply online, please visit:

<http://my.barackobama.com/vpresearch>

Applications must be submitted by Monday, January 11th.

VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

EARLY VOTING

Missouri - The ranking minority member of the House Elections Committee Rep. Michael Frame (D-Eureka) filed legislation Monday [Dec. 28th] that would establish an early voting process in Missouri. The Missouri General Assembly will consider the bill during the 2010 legislative session, which begins on Jan.6. Read the details here: <http://www.connectmidmissouri.com/news/story.aspx?id=394871>

FELONS VOTING

Florida - Southwest Florida elections officials are working to update their voter records. The initiative is in response to an August 2008 executive order from Florida Gov. Charlie Crist so the state can speed up restoration of civil rights, including the right to vote. Under Florida law, a person who is convicted of a felony loses his or her civil rights, including the right to vote, serve on a jury or hold elected office. The state will restore voting rights to a convicted felon involved in less severe, non-violent crime but Florida is a couple of years behind in its record-keeping. Read more here: <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2009/dec/29/collier-lee-counties-helping-state-restore-voting/>

VOTING LAW

Illinois - Voting this February could be a little more complicated. Thanks to a provision passed by the Illinois State Legislature and signed into law by then-Governor Rod Blagojevich in 2007, if a voter fails to vote for any particular office, many voting machines throughout the state will beep loudly and spit the ballot back out. An election judge will then have to assist the voter, either correcting the undervote; or overriding the system and casting the vote with the omission. Read more here: <http://www.pekintimes.com/news/x1689182012/Voting-law-proceeding-despite-concerns>

BALLOT FIGHT

New York - For years, Republican officials here [in Taghkanic, N.Y.] have watched with growing alarm as newcomers from New York City arrived in late-model cars, built second homes and started to vote in increasing numbers, usually for Democrats. Now Republicans, armed with private investigators, are pursuing a new strategy to preserve their power: take away part-time residents' right to vote here. Details can be found here:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/23/nyregion/23columbia.html?_r=1&scp=1&q=when%20part%20lines%20divide%20newcomer%20and%20native&st=cse

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

The Washington Monument was the tallest building in the world until completion of this building. What building became the tallest in the world?
Bonus: When was the building built?

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

The controversy over a block of marble donated by this person helped cause the work to be halted in 1854 when the monument was a mere 153 feet high. Who was that person?

ANSWER

Pope Pius IX contributed a block of marble as a commemorative stone in keeping with the practice started in 1849. Such commemorative stones often bore inscriptions which did not commemorate George Washington. The stone that was donated by Pope Pius IX stopped the Congressional appropriation and ultimately construction altogether. In March 1854, members of the anti-Catholic nativist American Party—better known as the "Know-Nothings"—stole the Pope's stone as a protest and supposedly threw it into the Potomac (it was replaced in 1982).

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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