



Fighting for Voting Rights and a Democratic United States

DEMOCRATIC LAW BRIEFS

A Publication of the DC Chapter of the National Lawyers Council

Volume 6 Issue 2 January 12, 2010

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

PHONE BANKS FOR MARTHA COAKLEY



ORGANIZING
FOR
AMERICA

In just 7 days, there's a special election in Massachusetts to fill Ted Kennedy's Senate seat.

We're holding phone banks every day until the election on January 19th at the Democratic National Committee Headquarters by the Capitol South Metro.

We'll make sure Massachusetts voters know when and where to vote -- and how important electing Martha Coakley is to the country.

Can you join us? Here are the details:

What: Phone banks for Martha Coakley

Where: Democratic National Committee Headquarters
430 South Capitol Street, SE
Washington, D.C., 20003

When: Every evening until Tuesday, January 19th
Times vary by day

RSVP NOW

No prior experience is necessary. Organizing for America volunteers will be on hand to provide all the materials and guidance you'll need to be successful.

RSVP here to as many phone banks as you can: <http://dc.barackobama.com/CoakleyDC>

Thank you for your help,

Jeremy

Jeremy Bird
Deputy Director
Organizing for America

VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

FELON VOTING

Seattle, WA - In a decision released on January 6, 2010, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held that Washington State's law denying the vote to people with felony convictions is racially discriminatory and violates the Voting Rights Act (VRA). According to LDF Director John Payton, the ruling is an affirmation that racial discrimination has disrupted the state's political process by denying the right to vote to minority persons convicted of felonies. Read the details here:

<http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/federal-appellate-court-strikes-blow,1107910.shtml>

Seattle, WA - Meanwhile, Washington Attorney General Rob McKenna says he'll appeal the federal court ruling giving incarcerated felons the right to vote in the state. The Voting Rights Act, according to McKenna, requires inspection of the broader community in order to determine who has the ability to vote and participate in the political process. Convicted lawbreakers lose that right. Read more here:

<http://www.pu-blicbroadcasting.net/kplu/news.newsmain/article/110/1596394/KPLU.Local.News/Washington.to.Appeal.Voting.Rights.for.Felons>

NYC WELCOMES IN THE ELECTRONIC VOTING AGE

New York, NY - The New York City Board of Elections last Tuesday selected Elections Systems and Software, an Omaha company, to provide new electronic voting machines in time for the September primary. The change means that New York City will finally be in compliance with the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002. That law was passed to avoid a repeat of the Florida debacle of 2000, which was marred by disputed ballots; it also will make it easier for disabled people to vote. The city had been one of the last municipalities, in the last state, to select an electronic system. New York State was so slow, in fact, that the Justice Department sued the state in 2006 and threatened to take away

federal money set aside for any costs associated with the transition to new technology. For more on this story go here:

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/06/n_yregion/06machines.html

VOTER EDUCATION PLAN

New York, NY- With the selection of new voting machines New Yorkers will need to be familiar with the new systems prior to Election Day to minimize voter confusion. Thus the newly inaugurated Public Advocate Bill de Blasio has proposed a community outreach plan that includes 10 recommendations designed to minimize voter confusion and the risk of disenfranchising the city's most vulnerable voters-undereducated, non-English speaking, disabled, and elderly New Yorkers. Read more here:

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/27598/>

and here: <http://pubadvocate.nyc.gov/pages/VIPforBOE.html>

VOTER ID INITIATIVE

Jackson, MS - The Voter ID Initiative has until February 14th to gather the required signatures to place the vote called Initiative Measure No. 27 on the next next statewide election ballot, scheduled for 2011. Republicans are using their old boogie man voter fraud, which has apparently worked well enough to have the MS Tea Party try to help gather the required signatures. Mississippi law requires least 90,000 signatures, spread equally from Mississippi's four congressional districts are needed in order for the petition drive to be certified. Read the initiative here:

<http://www.sos.state.ms.us/Elections/Initiatives/initiative0027.asp>

VOTING LAW

Providence, RI - The Rhode Island State Senate and House of Representatives voted to override two gubernatorial vetoes of landmark electoral reform legislation, thereby enacting FairVote-initiated measures allowing voter pre-registration for 16 and 17-year-olds and mandating popular elections to fill all U.S. Senate vacancies Read the details here:

[http://fairvote.org/rhode-island-legislature- overrides-electoral-reform-vetoes/](http://fairvote.org/rhode-island-legislature-overrides-electoral-reform-vetoes/)

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 @](mailto:editors@dc-dlc.org)

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

True or False: The Heights of Buildings law of 1917 law specifically states that no building in DC may be taller than the Washington Monument.

LAST 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?

ANSWER

Upon completion, the Washington Monument became the world's tallest structure, a title previously held by the Cologne Cathedral. In 1889 the Eiffel Tower grabbed the title. The Washington Monument remains the world's tallest stone structure. We had correct answers from Kevin Kingston and Gabriel Avecedo. 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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Democratic Law Briefs, E-Mail Edition, Volume 6 Number 2
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