

ELECTION PROTECTION **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE**

866-OUR-VOTE ■ www.866OurVote.org

An Open Letter

August 31, 2016

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Dear Party Leadership,

We write in defense of the bedrock principle of our democracy: the right to vote freely.

Recent calls to activate law enforcement near and within polling places and to deploy observers against imagined voter fraud in the upcoming presidential election threaten to subvert the democratic process by silencing the voices of American citizens. Election monitoring can be appropriate if conducted in a manner that facilitates rather than hinders participation by all eligible voters, consistent with all applicable federal and state laws. However, unsubstantiated predictions of voter fraud and rigged elections, coupled with the demagogic rhetoric of the last few months towards minority communities, constitute an unacceptable targeting of those members of our society most vulnerable to disenfranchisement. It raises concerns in our organizations that communities of color will face unwarranted intimidation and unlawful challenges, impeding the ability of voters, particularly voters of color, to exercise their right to vote in the fall.

Racial minorities have faced a long and painful history of intimidation at the ballot box, through many of the same methods proposed in recent weeks¹. There is no place for harassment of voters in American democracy. Past intimidation at the polls has led to a court order restraining precisely this type of behavior.

We urge you to act with deliberate speed to denounce this dangerous effort. You must make it clear that baseless challenges are not acceptable, and that the Voting Rights Act expressly prohibits intimidation of voters by anyone, whether acting under color of law or otherwise.

As members of the non-partisan Election Protection coalition, our organizations will remain steadfast in our work towards safeguarding access to the voting booth for all eligible Americans, regardless of political affiliation, race, disability, sexual orientation, or gender. All voters may rely upon the Election Protection hotlines² (866-OUR-VOTE, 888-VE-Y-VOTA, 888-API-VOTE) for questions and to report problems. Our staff and trained non-partisan volunteers will work unstintingly to uphold the right to vote against intimidation, deceptive practices, and unlawful challenges, so that every eligible voter is able to cast their ballot and have it count.

We can preserve our most sacred of rights only through free, fair, and accessible elections. We seek your commitment to combat this threat to our democracy, with the fierce urgency of now.

Sincerely,

The Election Protection Coalition

(List of organizations on following page)

¹ For more background on how overly zealous challenges are a threat to voting rights, see: <http://www.demos.org/publication/bullies-ballot-box-protecting-freedom-vote-against-wrongful-challenges-and-intimidation>

² English language assistance is available via 866-OUR-VOTE, is led by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Bilingual (English & Spanish) language assistance is available via 888-VE-Y-VOTA, is led by the National Association of Latino Elected Officials. Asian language assistance is available via 888-API-VOTE, is led by Asian American Justice Center—AAJC and APIA Vote.

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Ability360	National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
Advancement Project	National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
Advocacy Center of Louisiana	National Bar Association
AFL-CIO	National Congress of American Indians
African American Ministers Leadership Council	National Council of Jewish Women
Alliance for Justice	National Disability Rights Network
American Civil Liberties Union	Nebraskans for Civic Reform
American Constitution Society for Law and Policy	New Florida Majority
American Federation of Teachers	New Virginia Majority
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)	Ohio Voice
Arizona Advocacy Network	Organize Now
Arizona AFL-CIO	People For the American Way Foundation
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)	Progress Florida Education Fund
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC	Progress Virginia Education Fund
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)	Project Vote
Brennan Center for Justice	Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia
Campaign Legal Center	Public Counsel
Center for American Progress	Rock the Vote
Center for Media and Democracy	Service Employees International Union
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law	Southern Coalition for Social Justice
Common Cause	Southern Poverty Law Center
Common Cause Florida	Texas Civil Rights Project
Crescent City Media Group	The Bus Federation
Democracy North Carolina	The Center for Popular Democracy
Demos	The Voter Participation Center
Fair Elections Legal Network	Union for Reform Judaism
Franciscan Action Network	United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Keystone Votes	Verified Voting
LatinoJustice PRLDEF	Vote.org
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice	Voting Rights Institute, Georgetown University Law Center
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area	Voto Latino
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law	UNC Center for Civil Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens	Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
League of Women Voters	Virginia Civic Engagement Table
NAACP	Vote Riders
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.	Wisconsin Voices
NAACP-National Voter Fund	Young People For
National Action Network	Young Elected Officials Network