



June 25, 2012

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Via e-mail

Dear Senator:

We want to applaud the members of the Judiciary Committee for holding a hearing tomorrow on deceptive practices and urge the members of the Committee to support the passage of the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2011 (S.453).

The ability to cast a ballot free from interference protects the other essential freedoms that Americans hold dear. Unfortunately, recent elections have seen a proliferation of "deceptive practices" leading up to the vote. In Maryland in 2011, for instance, robocalls with erroneous information were made to more than 50,000 potential voters on Election Day. In 2006, also in Maryland, a number of paid campaign workers distributed inaccurate voter guides and sample ballots that misidentified candidates as an opposing party's preferred choices.

Often these deceptive practices include threats of legal retaliation against individuals who show up to vote. During the 2004 election season, fliers were circulated in black neighborhoods of Milwaukee from the nonexistent "Milwaukee Black Voters League" falsely informing voters that if they had voted in other elections that year, they were ineligible to vote in the Presidential election. These fliers stated, "If you've already voted in any election this year, you can't vote in the presidential election. . . If you violate any of these laws, you can get ten years in prison and your children will get taken away from you."

Similar deceptive practices are frequently targeted at students. In 2004, a county district attorney in Texas, attempting to impose unlawful requirements for proof of address, wrote a letter to the local election administrator stating that students at the Prairie View A&M University were ineligible to vote in the county and did not enjoy the same presumption of residency for voting purposes as other county residents. The district attorney's letter, which was subsequently published in a local paper, threatened to prosecute students who cast a ballot without meeting these unlawful requirements. And in 2008, flyers were posted around

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the Drexel University campus in Philadelphia warning that undercover officers would be at polling locations to arrest students with outstanding warrants or traffic violations.

The above is only a short sampling of the types of violations that are taking place. These practices suppress voter turnout, discourage civic participation, and do long-term damage to our democracy. The Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2011 would protect the right to vote, the indisputable cornerstone of our democracy, without interfering with rights granted under the First Amendment. Congress should act quickly to pass this needed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brenda" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Wright".

Brenda Wright
Vice President, Legal Strategies