

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

866-OUR-VOTE ■ www.866OurVote.org

An Open Letter

August 31, 2016

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PO Box 75075
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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

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