



CONTACT: Cory Curtis, (206) 727-2880; Sabrina Williams, (202) 728-9557

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REPORT ON 2008 ELECTION UNCOVERS BROAD ARRAY OF VOTING RIGHTS PROBLEMS

**VOTERS FACED BARRIERS IN ACCESSING THE BALLOT
AND CASTING THEIR VOTES**

**STUDY OF CNN AND MYVOTE1 VOTER HOTLINE DATA
TO BE PRESENTED TODAY BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL HEARING**

**VOTING RIGHTS GROUPS CALL FOR IMMEDIATE REMEDIES
TO HELP PROTECT VOTERS BEFORE THE 2010 ELECTION**

[NOTE TO PRESS: The US House Administration Committee will hold a hearing today, Thursday, July 23, 2009, at 11 am EST in 1310 Longworth House Office Building, at which this report will be released.]

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A new report to be released today before the United States Congress reveals that many voters across the country faced serious barriers in accessing the ballot and casting their votes in the 2008 election. The report, which relies on nearly 70,000 problem calls received by two national voter hotlines, recommends that Congress adopt immediate measures, including emergency paper ballots and voter affidavit procedures, to help protect voters in the 2010 election.

A coalition of national voting rights organizations which authored the report, including Advancement Project, NAACP National Voter Fund, and Voter Action, will present their findings today to the U.S. House Administration Committee. Their presentation will include excerpts of audio recordings from voters who called the CNN hotline (877-GOCNN08) and the MYVOTE1 hotline (866-MYVOTE1) on Election Day last November. The hotlines received a combined total of 68,992 calls during the general election from voters citing a broad array of problems in exercising the franchise. These problems included missing voter registration information from the voter rolls, confusion or misapplication of state or federal voter ID requirements, misadministration of provisional ballots, and voting machine breakdowns resulting in long lines at the polls.

“The broad perception among election administrators that 2008 was a ‘trouble-free’ year –as no state experienced a ‘Florida-like’ presidential recount – is belied by the voices of thousands of voters across several states who called the hotlines seeking help to vote,” the report states. “[I]t is crucial that Congress require states to adopt simple Election Day safeguards that will help to eliminate many of the barriers to voting identified by the hotline callers in 2008.”

The report urges that Congress institute the following measures “well in advance of the 2010 federal elections”:

- Require states to offer eligible citizens whose names are not on polling place voter lists, including voters who have moved within a state, a ‘voter affirmation affidavit,’ by which they can legally swear, under penalty, that they previously registered to vote. Upon completion of the affidavit, the voter would be issued a regular ballot
- Require states whose election jurisdictions are using electronic voting systems to stock a supply of emergency paper ballots at polling places as a backup tool in the event that electronic systems fail or to help alleviate long lines due to heavy voter turnout
- Require states to accept as valid polling place identification, at a minimum, all forms of photo and non-photo ID currently authorized by the Help America Vote Act

“This report demonstrates that we still have much work to do to protect the right to vote and the integrity of our elections,” says John Bonifaz, legal director for Voter Action. “We urge Congress to take the necessary steps to help ensure that voters do not face the barriers that they faced last year when they seek to cast their votes in the upcoming 2010 election.”

“The voices of voters discussed in this report capture the myriad obstacles that voters, particularly those from communities of color, faced in registering to vote and casting a ballot in the November election,” says Elizabeth Westfall, director of Advancement Project’s Voter Protection Program. “Immediate Congressional action is needed to remove unnecessary barriers to the franchise and ensure that all eligible voters will be permitted to participate in the 2010 election.”

"With the publication of this report the voices of the thousands of citizens who were denied their right to vote in 2008 are finally being heard," says Greg Moore, executive director of the NAACP National Voter Fund. "The more than 68,000 voters who took the time to report their problems to these voter hotlines have provided the necessary data that will allow Congress to make the legislative changes necessary to eliminate these barriers in future elections."

The voter hotlines serving as the basis for this report were created and run by InfoVoter Technologies, a Philadelphia-based firm that partnered with several national media organizations, voting rights groups and labor unions to assist voters on Election Day. The 866-MYVOTE1 hotline number was marketed by the NAACP National Voter Fund primarily to African-American audiences through the Tom Joyner Morning Show, BlackAmericaWeb.com, American Urban Radio Networks, and the National Coalition of Black Civic Participation. The 877-GOCNN08 hotline number was marketed primarily on CNN and its affiliated networks.

The voter hotline calls discussed in this report focus on the six states -- Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia -- where voter registration and participation were high. The organizations releasing this report listened to a combined total of nearly 17,000 calls from these six states in conducting their study with research assistance from the Toll Public Interest Center at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. More than 900 of these calls, covering the range of problems voters faced on Election Day last November, can be accessed via problem type and state by visiting <http://www.voteraction.org/electionreport>. To learn more about this report and the organizations which have authored it, see: www.voteraction.org; www.advancementproject.org; and www.naacpnvf.net.