

## Coalition Says Restrictions On Voting Rights Have Reached A State Of Emergency

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By National Urban League

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19, 2012 — ***Millions of Seniors, Minorities, Youth and Veterans Could be Turned Away at the Polls Under New Laws***

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19, 2012 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A broad coalition of civil rights, social justice and faith-based organizations, and groups representing communities of color today declared a "state of emergency" on voting rights in the U.S. and said that millions of people could be disenfranchised by restrictive voter laws.

As National Voter Registration Day approaches on September 25<sup>th</sup> the coalition—which includes groups representing African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders and Native Americans—are calling on their communities to take a few simple steps to ensure that all those who are eligible have what they need to fully participate in our democracy by voting:

- Check your registration status
- Check the documentation needed to register and to vote
- Check the deadlines for registration and early/absentee voting
- Check your state voter laws
- Check your polling location and hours

The coalition also is highlighting a number of community-specific resources to assist with voter registration and information:

- Advancement Project – *Protect Our Vote 2012* [www.advancementproject.org/campaigns/Protect-Your-Vote](http://www.advancementproject.org/campaigns/Protect-Your-Vote)
- NAACP – *This is My Vote* [www.thisismyvote.org/](http://www.thisismyvote.org/)
- National Congress of American Indians – *2012 Native Vote – Every Vote Counts* [www.nativevote.org/](http://www.nativevote.org/)
- National Council of La Raza – *Mobilize to Vote* [www.nclr.org/register](http://www.nclr.org/register) [www.nclr.org/challenge](http://www.nclr.org/challenge).
- National Urban League – *Occupy the Vote* [www.iamempowered.com/occupythetvote](http://www.iamempowered.com/occupythetvote)
- PICO Network – *Let My People Vote* <http://www.piconetwork.org/tools-resources/let-my-people-vote-resources>
- AAJC – (materials available in Asian languages) [Voting Rights Act Protections](#)

In addition, there are general resources available for voter information and registration:

- 1-866-MYVOTE1 (1-866-698-6831) – To register to vote
- 1-866-OURVOTE or <http://www.866ourvote.org/state> — For information on voting rights or to report problems with voting

Data compiled by a number of independent, non-partisan organizations indicate that minorities, senior citizens, veterans, youth, low-income people and previously convicted felons will bear the brunt of laws imposed over the past two years that cut back on voting days and times, impose rigid registration and identification requirements, and erroneously purge eligible voters from voter rolls.

Find more background information [here](#).

## **Quotes from coalition partners:**

### **Marc H. Morial, president and CEO, National Urban League**

"America is the leading democracy in the world, and was founded on the principle that we all are created equal," said Marc H. Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League. "Throughout our history, Americans have given much—in blood and treasure—to help secure the right to vote both here at home and in other countries. We must strengthen our efforts to protect this right, and we must educate and invigorate our communities so we can increase our turnout and ensure that our voices are heard."

### **Judith Browne Dianis, co-director, Advancement Project**

"Collectively, we are witnessing the greatest assault on voting rights in more than a century," said Judith Browne Dianis, co-director of Advancement Project. "We know that Election Day is a day where we are all equal, whether rich or poor and regardless of race, we all have the same power when we walk into the voting booth. That is why we are fighting back – and we're winning."

### **Benjamin Todd Jealous, president and CEO, NAACP**

"It's been more than a century since we've seen such a tidal wave of assaults on the right to vote. Historically, when voting rights are attacked, it's done to facilitate attacks on other rights. It is no mistake that the groups who are behind this are simultaneously attacking very basic women's rights, environmental protections, labor rights, and educational access for working people and minorities," said NAACP president and CEO Benjamin Todd Jealous.

### **Eric Rodriguez, vice president, Office of Research, Advocacy and Legislation, National Council of La Raza**

"Sponsors of these suppressive measures argue that the laws are in place to protect against fraud, yet, exhaustive searches for a history of voter fraud in many of these states come back empty," said Eric Rodriguez, vice president, office of research, advocacy and legislation. "In Indiana and Pennsylvania for example, strict voter ID requirements we're put into place yet those states have zero documented cases of voter impersonation. Makes you question what the real intent is, when you look at how it impacts minorities, I think it becomes obvious."

### **Ralph Everett, president and CEO, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies**

Participatory democracy and civic engagement are bedrock American values, and that is why it is so outrageous that states would be moving to make voting more difficult, particularly when there is no evidence that voter fraud is a problem in our country. Expanding voter participation, and not suppressing it, is the way to live up to America's most cherished ideals. We are proud to join in this effort to help citizens overcome any efforts to prevent or discourage them from voting, and ultimately to reverse this dangerous folly that is sweeping through our voting system."

### **Jefferson Keel, president, National Congress of American Indians**

"Over the last century since securing our rightful place at the ballot box, Native people have remained one of the most disenfranchised group of voters in the United States. Today as a result, two out of every five eligible American Indian and Alaska Native voters are not registered to vote, in 2008 over 1 million eligible Native voters were unregistered."

### **Miles Rapoport, president, Demos**

"We're seeing a significant increase in organized efforts intended to challenge voting rights and eligibility around the country, including extreme groups planning bullying tactics at the polls," said Miles Rapoport, president of Demos. "It is critical that states enforce laws on the books that safeguard civic participation and protect voters from interference. Together, we can stand up to intimidation at the ballot box and empower communities to defend their freedom to vote."

**Mee Moua, president and executive director of the Asian American Justice Center**

*(on behalf of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum.)*

"All eligible Americans must have a fair opportunity to vote – regardless of their race, ethnicity or ability to speak English. Lawmakers should be protecting the right of every community to vote, not restricting it."

**Rinku Sen, president and executive director, Applied Research Center**

"Voting is not just a right, it's a civic responsibility—one that works two ways between the constituents and the state. When that state tramples rights by introducing voter ID laws, reduced voting hours, and conducting dubious purges, it threatens the ability for all eligible voters to participate. In 2008, we saw how people of color participated in record numbers. Now, voting restrictions puts access to the ballot box for those voters far beyond their control, but communities are fighting back to retain the rights that were guaranteed with the historic passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965."

**Rev. Michael-Ray Mathews, director of clergy organizing, PICO National Network.**

"As faith leaders, we stand in the tradition of clergy before us who struggled long and hard to secure the right to vote for those marginalized from the public square. Restrictive voter laws threaten this hard-won right. PICO's *Let My People Vote* campaign honors and extends the legacy of our elders in the faith, ensuring the free and fair elections that are central to sustaining this precious right. We pledge to preach, teach, organize and register people of faith this season to safeguard this opportunity for all American citizens."

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