

OPINION

Weakened, Defeated or Delayed

A tribute to the power of civil rights

BY MARC H. MORIAL



A recent ruling by Pennsylvania Judge Robert Simpson delaying the implementation of the state's new voter ID law is the latest in a string of defeats for voter suppression advocates who are failing in their attempts to disenfranchise millions of voters and unfairly sway the November presidential election.

With less than a month to go before the election, legal challenges brought by the U.S. Justice Department and others have resulted in blocking the implementation of discriminatory voter ID laws in Wisconsin, Texas, and South Carolina, in addition to the all important swing state of Penn-

sylvania.

Proposed laws in Alabama and Mississippi are also not likely to be approved before Nov. 6 because of continuing Justice Department scrutiny. Virtually everywhere these laws have been challenged they have been weakened, defeated or delayed. This is a tribute to the power of civil rights and citizen action and a sharp rebuke to those who seek to change the rules of the game for their own political ends.

While these new voter ID laws have sprung up around the country ostensibly to combat voter fraud, proponents have been hard pressed to present evidence to support that claim. In fact, in Pennsylvania no cases of voter fraud have been reported in the past decade. On the other hand, if the law had been allowed to take effect, more than 80,000 eligible Pennsylvania voters may have

been turned away from the polls on Nov. 6.

In July, Wisconsin State Judge, David Flanagan blocked that state's restrictive voter ID law after testimony showing that 330,000 eligible Wisconsin voters do not have forms of ID required by the law. In 2004, Wisconsin had seven confirmed instances of voter fraud out of nearly three million votes cast. And in August, a federal court blocked a Texas law, saying that it would impose "strict, unforgiving burdens" on poor minority voters, many of whom would have had to travel over 200 miles round trip to obtain the required ID.

While we are heartened by these recent voting rights victories, we remain concerned about the eventual implementation of these discriminatory laws, and whether they will be used to disenfranchise historically vulnerable citizens including seniors,

people of color and young people.

Realizing that a number of voter ID laws may be blocked before Nov. 6, many supporters are now aiming to undermine the 2014 midterm elections and the presidential election of 2016.

Pennsylvania Attorney General Tom Corbett says he still supports the blocked state law and Wisconsin Attorney General Van Hollen has said, "I will continue the battle to have the law upheld."

Make no mistake about it: Through our Occupy the Vote campaign and in collaboration with other grassroots voting rights efforts, the National Urban League will continue to oppose any effort to deny the right to vote to any eligible citizen, whether in a Presidential election year or any other.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

Letter to the Editor

Yes on the School Bond

We are writing in support of the Portland Public Schools Bond and hope that you will join us in voting yes on Measure #26-144.

Our children need – and deserve – schools that are healthy, accessible, and safe.

We have talked with many of many friends, neighbors, and community members about this bond. We understand the complex issues and tight budgets facing many Portlanders, and both the Latino Network and the Black Parent Initiative recommend voting "yes" on the School Bond.

With this bond, we can begin to restore school buildings. Previous generations invested in our schools; now it's our turn. The work funded by this first bond is focused on seismic upgrades and structural improvements to preserve buildings and increase accessibility in schools.

Now, classrooms are too hot or too cold, overcrowded and under-resourced. Students study

science without real labs. Leaky roofs make it difficult for teachers to teach and students to learn.

We are excited that Concordia University and PPS are partnering to rebuild Faubion K-8. The new facility will be a national model of collaboration and provide a boost to the surrounding neighborhood.

Three high schools will be fully modernized through wide-ranging discussions with families, teachers, neighborhoods, and businesses that will help bring schools back to their rightful place as the center of the community.

Voting "yes" for the School Bond is important for everyone in our community – even those without kids currently attending PPS. High-quality schools promote success that impacts every level of a community. Please join us in voting "yes" on Measure 26-144.

Carmen Rubio, Latino Network and Charles McGee III, Black Parent Initiative

Invest in Education

I believe in a good quality public education for the youth of Portland. An essential first step is to ensure we're providing safe and high quality buildings for them to learn in.

Children deserve buildings that are seismically safe, with roofs that don't leak, and with properly heated and lighted classrooms where they will want to learn. Portland's future generations deserve educational facilities with science labs that contribute to skills for a 21st century economy and jobs.

It's time to end the era of divestment in public education in this state. Portland voters have the opportunity to reverse that trend by voting Yes on Measure 26-144.

Brian Hoop

Northwest Portland

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