

## OPINION

# GOP Voter Suppression Backfires

Marching to polls as never before



BY DONNA BRAZILE  
AND WILL CROSSLEY

For more than two years Republicans have campaigned and legislated against the right of certain groups of people to vote. On Election Day, Republicans suffered the consequences.

The very groups the GOP targeted -- among them African Americans, Latinos, and young people -- turned out in record numbers, propelling to victory the president and Democrats across the country. The Republicans' strategy failed because it awakened the most powerful force in a democracy: the determination of the voters themselves.

Republican lawmakers and conservative activists undertook a concerted effort to keep minorities, students and those with lower or fixed incomes (including many of our

seniors) from voting. One GOP official in Ohio said early voting cuts were necessary to check the power of "the urban -- read African-American -- voter-turnout machine."

A leader of the Tea Party group "True the Vote" said he wanted to make the experience of voting "like driving and seeing the police following you." The Republican House speaker in New Hampshire said restrictions on college students voting were needed because "voting as a liberal ... that's what kids do."

To reduce turnout among these groups, Republican officials deployed a variety of tactics. Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted and Florida Gov. Rick Scott slashed the amount of time available for early voting, which is disproportionately utilized by minority and low-income voters. GOP legislators in Pennsylvania enacted a photo ID law, and then failed to establish adequate procedures for allowing more than 700,000 Pennsylvanians who lacked photo ID to obtain one.

Voter purges attempted by Gov. Scott and Colorado Secretary of State Scott Gessler targeted thousands of lawfully registered voters. "True the Vote" -- surely a

leading candidate for the Newspeak Award -- challenged minority voter registrations on an unprecedented scale.

The Obama campaign, the Democratic National Committee, and other voting rights advocates responded by challenging many of these restrictions in court. The courts blocked many of the worst measures, including Pennsylvania's photo ID law and the bulk of Florida's voter purge. The Obama campaign and the DNC successfully litigated to restore the final three days of early voting for all Ohioans, and defended this right all the way to the Supreme Court.

Yet the untold story of the 2012 election is not the efforts of lawyers or activists, but the unyielding determination of everyday ordinary citizens determined to cast their ballots. They won on Tuesday. Here's why.

When Secretary Husted tried to change election rules last year, Ohioans responded by gathering 300,000 signatures toward a referendum that successfully suspended the law. After we successfully restored access for the last three days of early voting, the African-Ameri-

can community participated in record numbers, aided by a massive turnout for Souls to the Polls on the Sunday before Election Day. Overall, the African-American share of the Ohio electorate was more than in 2008.

In Florida, 150 black pastors organized "Operation Lemonade" -- named for the "lemon" they were handed when Gov. Scott cut early voting. Although the state reduced the number of early voting days from 14 to eight, and eliminated voting on the Sunday before Election Day, nearly as many voters -- 2.4 million in all -- voted early as in 2008.

On Election Day, voters stood with determination in unconscionably long lines, some that stretched for up to seven hours. Though some voters were elderly, frail, missing work, or simply exhausted, they refused, undeterred by the line and in fact galvanized by the bad intent. Voters and activists used social media to stand in solidarity as the hashtag #StayInLine quickly began trending on Twitter. People were so determined to vote that many polling places ran out of provisional ballots.

When the dust settled, the very

groups targeted for suppression and intimidation had voted in record numbers. Compared to 2008, African Americans, Hispanics, and people under age 29 all represented a greater share of the national electorate.

In September, Georgia congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis told the Democratic National Convention:

I've seen this before. I lived this before. Too many people struggled, suffered, and died to make it possible for every American to exercise their right to vote. And we have come too far together to ever turn back... [W]e must not be silent. We must stand up, speak up, and speak out. We must march to the polls like never, ever before.

On Election Day, we marched to the polls, and persevered lines as long as necessary to cast our ballots. We marched and stood for many reasons -- not least among them, the refusal to let others trample on our hard-won rights. Those seeking to do so would be wise to heed this lesson in the years to come.

Donna Brazile is vice chairwoman and Will Crossley is voter protection director for the Democratic National Committee.

## Ending the Partisan Gridlock American people want to get things done

BY MARC MORIAL

You might expect that one of the longest and most intense presidential campaigns in American history should be followed

by a period of rest and celebration. We cannot afford that luxury at this time.

While we congratulate President Obama and Vice President Biden on their decisive victory last week, we believe that urgent issues like the approaching fiscal cliff, the education of our children, continuing high unemployment and a still sluggish economic recovery require immedi-



ate action.

The American people not only voted to make President Obama a two-term president, they voted for the end of partisan gridlock in Washington and a government that gets things done. That is why on the day after the election I sent a letter addressed to President Obama, Rep. Nancy Pelosi and Speaker John Boehner, urging them to immediately get to work on four critical priorities for the next four years:

A comprehensive jobs program executed through a partnership among government, the private sector and the nation's non-profit community.

An intense focus on children and youth, with a national policy to move the nation toward universal early childhood education, an expansion of the effort to make post-secondary education affordable, and an emphasis on job training and skills retraining for those who did not finish high school on time.

A comprehensive new approach to community safety and crime reduction, with a stronger enforcement of existing gun laws, re-enactment of the assault weapons ban and a thoughtful examination of disparities in the criminal justice system.

And finally, a fair and sensible deficit reduction plan that includes

one dollar in revenue enhancements for every dollar in spending cuts.

In my letter I emphasized that the devastation of Superstorm Sandy exposed the desperately slim margin to which our most vulnerable citizens cling. Even before the storm hit, African American and Latino unemployment had been over 10 percent for the past four years. It currently registers at 13.8 percent and 9.7 percent respectively.

In addition, if Congress and the President fail to reach an agreement by New Year's Day, \$1.2 trillion in automatic across-the-board cuts will be made to domestic and defense programs, including draco-

nian cuts to education, nutrition programs for women, infants and children and low-income heating assistance.

Avoiding the so-called "fiscal cliff" of sequestration and reducing the deficit in a way that is fair must be the first order of business.

The National Urban League will soon convene an Urban Ideas Forum with policy and program experts, private sector executives and analysts to elevate the discussion of income inequality, disparities in education and workforce investment.

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

The Portland Observer Established 1970

USPS 959-680

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

ASSISTANT TO PUBLISHER, PUBLIC RELATIONS: Mark Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt

ASSISTANT TO PUBLISHER, OFFICE MANAGER/CLASSIFIEDS: Lucinda Baldwin

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER: Leonard Latin

ADVERTISING MANAGER, PUBLIC RELATIONS: Tony Washington

STAFF WRITER/PHOTOGRAPHER: Cari Hachmann

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 2008 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association

CALL 503-288-0033 FAX 503-288-0015

news@portlandobserver.com

ads@portlandobserver.com

subscription@portlandobserver.com

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Portland Observer, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208