

electionlineWeekly — September 25, 2008

electionline.org

I. In Focus This Week

Election Protection launches voter-support hotline, Web site

More than 100 partner organizations prepare for November

By [Kat Zambon](#)

Electionline.org

With record voter turnout expected at the polls this November, the Election Protection coalition, which includes the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Rock the Vote say they have prepared largest and most comprehensive election watch effort ever undertaken.

"We're confident that we can help millions of Americans overcome obstacles to make sure their votes count," said Jonah Goldman, director of the National Campaign for Fair Elections, part of the Lawyers' Committee.

The primary tool will be a toll-free phone number, 1-866-OUR-VOTE (and its Spanish counterpart 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA), a nonpartisan confidential voter services hotline.

"All voters, this is your lifeline when it comes to information around voting. If you have any questions, any problems, any rumors ... this is where you should turn," Barbara Arnwine, Lawyers' Committee executive director said. "You can't dial it enough."

The hotline's web component, 866ourvote.org (veyvota.org in Spanish) allows voters to [share their polling place problems](#).

Organizers say legal experts are already answering calls and chronicling the problems that voters experience. In the past, reported issues have included problematic voting machines, intimidation, inadequate voter education and poor poll worker training.

Tyler Perry, a film director and actor, will also star in public service announcements that will air in parts of the country where voters have experienced challenges in recent elections, encouraging voters to call the hotline.

"We are [already] seeing some issues of just incompetence and very poor election administration" Arnwine.

Those include possible challenges of Michigan voters that are registered at foreclosed properties and notices that have been sent to New Jersey voters warning that they may not be properly registered.

Efrain Escobedo, National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) education fund voter engagement director, said he's concerned about the high number of legal residents who have applied for citizenship but have been caught in applications backlogs. He said NALEO is working with the Spanish network Univision to promote the hotline.

"We've heard it many times before that this is the election for young people and it has never been truer," said Heather Smith, executive director of Rock the Vote. Some estimate that voter participation among those under 30 in this year's hotly contested primary [doubled nationally](#) compared with the 2000 primaries.

Rock the Vote is reaching out to young voters with a bus tour stopping in areas where young voters may be confused about the process. Recent stops included Virginia Tech University, where [students were told](#) that registering to vote where they attend school may cause them to lose scholarship money, and a stop at the Veterans' Affairs (VA) medical center in Washington, D.C. to register voters following the lifting of a ban on voter registration activities at VA hospitals.

"We want to make sure no one is confused so we're going out today to make sure young people can vote," Smith said. "We want to make sure that each of the voters we bring into the process ... not just register but have their votes counted."

Jackie Johnson, National Congress of American Indians executive president said she expects the native vote to be the crucial in battleground states including Wisconsin, Minnesota and New Mexico.

"Unfortunately with the increased attention comes the increased targeting of native voters," she said, noting that the validity of tribal ID cards has been challenged at polling places.

[Native Vote](#), part of the Election Protection coalition is working in 20 states with high populations of American Indians with legal teams familiar with Indian country and native law to offer assistance. "We believe that this collective effort can make a real difference to empower traditionally disenfranchised native communities," she said.

II. Election Reform News This Week

- [Early and absentee voting kicked off this week](#) across the country. In [Georgia](#), where state law requires ballots be available 45 days prior to an election, county offices saw steady turnout as soon as their doors opened on Monday. According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the enthusiasm was evident in Henry County where officials said seven or eight voters were in line at the front door an hour before the building opened. "We were really surprised," said Frances Jackson, elections coordinator. "People are anxious to voice their concerns and want to express them early." One percent of the voting population in [DeKalb County](#) cast their ballots in the first two days of early voting. In [Muscoogie County](#), officials said turnout was much heavier the first few days than anticipated and expect early voting could break records.
- In a reversal of an earlier decision, the [U.S. Department of Justice will not be sending prosecutors into the field](#) on Election Day as poll monitors. According to The Associated Press, the move reverses a decades-long practice that put prosecutors on the lookout for voter fraud, ballot access violations and other polling problems. "In light of questions we have been asked regarding who will serve as election monitors, I want to inform the public that no criminal prosecutors will be utilized as election monitors on Election Day this year," acting Assistant Attorney General Grace Chung Becker said in a statement. She added: "This decision was made as a precaution and is not the result of any instance of intimidation or complaint regarding any specific incident."
- Members of the McKinley County, N.M. Commission expressed concerns this week at the decision by [county elections officials to send a mobile voting unit to the Zuni Pueblo](#). According to the *Gallup Independent*, the commission members said they feared that it would result in the county being sued if there was a close election and someone claimed that the county tried to determine the outcome by selecting areas that might favor one candidate. State law requires the county to provide an early voting site on an Indian reservation or pueblo if it's requested by the tribe. Zuni tribe officials requested an early site. This is not the first time the commission has tried to stop the early-voting van from going to the area. The commission rejected a proposal to send the mobile unit to seven sites for the February primary.
- While the controversy over missing ballots continues in [Palm Beach County](#), it was like déjà vu all over again in Sarasota and Manatee counties after [Christine Jennings](#), who lost the race to

represent Florida's 13th Congressional District in 2006 in an election plagued by more than 18,000 uncast votes in her race, filed public information requests with election officials. According to the Bradenton Herald, Jennings requested 11 different sets of information, including lists of voters purged from eligible voter lists in 2008, monthly reports on new voters since 2006, and all documents regarding the design of the November 2008 ballot. She also asked for information on all early voting sites and memos regarding voter problems and complaints about voting machines. Leaders of the Republican parties in Sarasota and Manatee counties say the requests show that Jennings is gearing [for another legal fight in her rematch against GOP incumbent Vern Buchanan](#). But Jennings, who lost the contested 2006 election to Buchanan by 369 votes, said she has confidence in the November 4 election and has no intention to sue. "Planning to sue is so, so ridiculous it hardly deserves an answer," Jennings told the *Herald Tribune*. "I really believe that this will be a fine election. Having a paper trail is what we needed and that's what we've got."

III. Research and Report Summaries

In a new feature, electionline will provide brief summaries of recent research and reports in the field of election administration. Please e-mail links to research to sgreene@electionline.org.

[Engaging the Energized Electorate: NASS Survey on State Preparations for the 2008 Presidential Election](#) – Prepared by the National Association of Secretaries of State, Sept. 24, 2008

A NASS survey of its members [describes](#) how states are preparing for a potential flood of voters at the polls this November. The report focuses on state outreach efforts to voters and includes information on: state voter hotlines, election equipment demonstrations, online voter tools, targeted outreach, convenience voting, poll worker recruitment and training, polling place efficiency, contingency planning and post-election audits. [State-by-state profiles](#) are also provided.

[Provisional Voting: Fail-Safe Voting or Trapdoor to Disenfranchisement](#) – The Advancement Project, September 2008

The differing rates at which states and jurisdictions issue and count provisional ballots is examined with a specific analysis of the 2006 general elections in Florida and Ohio. The report finds that eligible voters were incorrectly issued provisional ballots that were eventually rejected, voters were directed to the wrong precincts by poll workers where they cast provisional ballots that were also rejected and other provisional ballots were rejected due to administrative errors. Additionally, in both states, provisional ballots were found to be issued at higher rates than necessary. Recommendations include improving poll worker training, allow provisional ballots to be eligible for counting if cast in the wrong precinct (for non-precinct related races), eliminate barriers to registration and increase the transparency of the provisional voting process.

[The New Mexico 2006 Post Election Audit Report](#) – By Lonna Rae Atkinson, R. Michael Alvarez and Thad E. Hall, Sept. 22, 2008

In the spring of 2008, the authors developed and tested post-election audit procedures in Bernalillo County, New Mexico to find methods that might work in other states and to provide specific recommendations to the Secretary of State Mary Herrera about how to conduct the 2008 post-election audit. Counting procedures, sampling procedures, and chain of custody procedures were experimented with and recommendations were made in a dozen areas including: ballot reconciliation, pre-election preparation for the post election audit, transparency of the process, sampling methods, example forms, audit team selection standards, reporting outcomes, voter intent standards and hand-counting procedures. (Note: This study was funded in part by the Pew Charitable Trusts.)

[Uniformity in Election Administration: A 2008 Survey of Swing State County Clerks New Mexico Edition](#) – By Daniel Weaver, Allison McNeely and Adam Fogel, FairVote, Sept. 4, 2008

In the second in a series of surveys of election administrators in ten swing states, researchers at FairVote examine [New Mexico](#). The report concludes that the state has done well in several areas including offering standardized voting equipment throughout the state as well as providing college students access to polling places. However the researchers add the state could do a better job of creating standards for poll booth allocation and mandating counties have written election plans. Of the state's 33

counties, 29 responded to FairVote's survey, and of these five said they were preparing written plans for poll booth allocation. Many counties not preparing a written plan stated that with the experience in their offices a written plan was not necessary.

[Alternative Voting Methods](#) – The U.S. Election Assistance Commission, prepared by Doug Lewis, executive director, The Election Center, September 2008

Per a requirement of the Help America Vote Act, the federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC) recently adopted a study on alternative voting methods that it commissioned in 2006. The [study examines](#) early voting in Texas which was first implemented in 1987, election day as a holiday in Illinois and Maryland, vote-by-mail in Oregon, vote centers in Colorado, weekend voting in several jurisdictions, voting in Puerto Rico and a look at uniform poll closing. Each alternative to election day polling place voting is assessed for its feasibility and advisability in other jurisdictions.

[A Voter's Guide to Federal Elections](#) - The U.S. Election Assistance Commission, September 2008

The EAC also released its guide for the November presidential election, providing information on the election process from registering to vote to casting a ballot. Additionally it provides guidance on early and absentee voting, military and overseas civilian voting, provisional ballots, accessibility for voters with disabilities and language assistance.

IV. Opinion This Week

National: [Hanging chads](#); [Veteran voting](#); [Absentee voting](#); [Early voting](#); [Election Day](#); [Election integrity](#)

Alabama: [Military voting](#)

Arizona: [Election integrity](#)

Florida: [Vote-by-mail](#); [Palm Beach County](#); [Election fraud](#); [Early voting](#); [Voting machines](#)

Georgia: [Vote suppression](#); [Election integrity](#)

Louisiana: [Voter registration](#)

Michigan: [Election Day](#); [Voting rights](#)

New Jersey: [Vote-by-mail](#)

Ohio: [Disputed ballots](#); [Jennifer Brunner](#)

Pennsylvania: [Election reform](#); [Voting system](#)

Virginia: [Turnout](#)

Washington: [Veteran's registration](#)

Wisconsin: [Voter ID](#); [Electioneering](#)

***some sites require registration*

V. Available Grants

Fair Elections Projects 2008—Mitchell Kapor Foundation recognizes the importance of voting and the need to protect the utmost integrity of the electoral process. The foundation is interested in work which addresses the following categories: voter participation, with a focus on implementing nonpartisan strategies to improve voter education and registration; and election protection, with a focus on ensuring that every eligible voter can vote and that every ballot cast is counted. For the remainder of 2008, the foundation is only considering efforts that are national in scope. **Eligibility:** Nonprofit organization.

Deadline: Open. **Funds:** \$1.3 million available to fund awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000. **Web site:** www.mkf.org/votingaccess/index/html.

VI. Job Postings This Week

All job listings must be received by 12 p.m. Eastern on Wednesday for publication in our Thursday newsletter. Job listings are free but may be edited for length. Whenever possible, include Internet information. Please email job postings to mmoretti@electionline.org

Chief Deputy — L.A. County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Los Angeles, Calif. The Chief Deputy Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk reports to the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, and acts as assistant

head of the Department of the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. This one position is distinguished by its executive and administrative responsibility for assisting the Registrar-Recorder/ County Clerk in the planning, organization, and direction of all operations of the Department including those of the County Clerk operations, Registrar operations, and Recorder operations. Minimum Requirements: Five years of progressively responsible experience in an administrative or management capacity directing or assisting in directing through subordinate managers, a major organizational unit with responsibility for multiple high profile functions or services, including elections administration and legal document processing or functions of a similar level of complexity. This experience may have been in either a public or private agency or businesses providing public services. **Salary:** \$129,045-\$195,320. **Application:** Submit statement of interest and resume to: Marco Morejon, Department of Human Resources, Executive Recruitment; Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration; 500 West Temple Street, Room 555; Los Angeles, CA 90012; Phone: (213) 974-2675; Fax: (213) 613-4773. E-mail: mmorejon@hr.lacounty.gov. [Web site](#). **Deadline:** Open.

Election Law Experts — Open Voting Consortium (OVC) is seeking election law expert(s) to sign on to a proposal for which funding is anticipated. Part of this work will involve drafting language to be included in a bill to be introduced in the CA state legislature next January. OVC is best known as the developer of free open source software for public voting systems. See OVC's [Web site](#) for more information. For more details contact Alan Dechert at alan@openvoting.org.

Poll Workers — American University's Center for Democracy and Election Management (CDEM) is recruiting Washington, D.C. area college students to serve as poll workers in Washington, D.C. on November 4th, 2008. For more info and to apply, please visit the [Web site](#). You can contact CDEM at cdem@american.edu.