



We Know How to Fix This:

Recommendations for the Presidential Commission on Election Administration

(December 20, 2013) President Obama recently confirmed that he is expecting the final report of his Presidential Commission on Election Administration (“PCEA”) by the end of the year. We hope in its report the PCEA will recommend the measures needed to fix the long lines and other aspects of our election system that are impeding access to our most fundamental rights, particularly for voters of color. We also hope the PCEA will use this as an opportunity to call for full funding of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (“EAC”), which lacks even the most minimal staff and resources needed to collect essential data about our nation’s election system and protect ballot access for all Americans.

Working with national and community partners, Advancement Project, a multi-racial civil rights organization, submitted testimony to the PCEA on the voting experience of voters of color, worked closely with the NAACP and its local state conferences, and released a comprehensive report co-authored with OurTime.org about the impact of our broken voting system on the next generation of voters. We have collected stories of voters of color waiting in line for seven, eight or more hours just to exercise their fundamental right to vote, along with testimony and data on the other election administration issues under consideration by the PCEA.

Community-based organizations in Florida and Pennsylvania—including Florida New Majority, Disability Rights Florida, Common Cause Pennsylvania, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, as well as the Florida and Pennsylvania branches of the NAACP—also presented testimony on how election administration must be improved, with recommendations that can be applied across the country. Groups such as the NAACP, ACLU of Pennsylvania, Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania, and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action have also shaped the conversation on obstacles faced by voters of color in their communities.

Disability Rights Florida presented stories of people with disabilities who faced many barriers to their voting rights – barriers which can readily be fixed by full compliance with Section 7 of the National Voter Registration Act, as well as ensuring accessible formats for all materials, full accessibility of polling locations, enhanced poll worker training and the use of voting equipment that treats all voters equally. Florida New Majority’s testimony emphasized how, in the face of state legislators that pass new voting laws making it harder to vote, particularly for voters of color, we need consistent election standards that solidly protect this fundamental right. Common Cause Pennsylvania identified best practices for

election systems that are fair, proficiently administered, with uniformly applied standards, conducted in a voter-friendly manner, and free of any voter intimidation or suppression activities.

The story of Ms. Desiline Victor, the 103-year-old Haitian-American woman who waited three hours in North Miami and had to return later before she could finally vote—and who was invited by the President to his January 2013 State of the Union address—epitomizes the gravity of the problem. As detailed in Advancement Project’s Florida testimony, she deserves better in many ways. The organizations here related the unique experiences of other voters navigating their local elections system through their own submissions, and concur in the recommendations highlighted below.

We hope that the PCEA will carefully consider our submissions and recommend to the President specific uniform, operational fixes to our election system to ensure that elections are free, fair and accessible. We also hope they will offer solutions for ensuring the EAC is fully operational. Other recommendations include:

- (1) Inclusive and Effective Online Registration
- (2) Facilitating Third-Party Voter Registration
- (3) Same-Day Registration
- (4) Mandatory Early Voting Periods
- (5) Eliminating Strict Voter ID Requirements
- (6) Improving Voter Assistance and Accessibility
- (7) Uniform Standards for Voting Machine and Poll Worker Allocation

Advancement Project, NAACP, OurTime.org, ACLU of Pennsylvania, Florida New Majority, the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania, Common Cause Pennsylvania, Disability Rights Florida, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action urge the PCEA to adopt the strong recommendations needed to fix our broken election system. Rather than making voting more difficult, election officials should concentrate on positive measures that make voting more accessible. The promise of democracy is a fundamental American principle that the PCEA can set as an achievable standard for generations to come.

Our submissions to the PCEA can be found below:

[Advancement Project Public Comment Submitted to the PCEA \(Miami, 6/28/2013\)](#)

[Advancement Project Public Comment Submitted to the PCEA \(Philadelphia, 9/4/2013\)](#)

[The Time Tax: America’s Newest Form of Voter Suppression for Millennials, and How it Must Be Eliminated to Make Voting Accessible for the Next Generation \(OurTime.org & Advancement Project report\)](#)

[Disability Rights Florida Public Comment Submitted to the PCEA \(Miami, 6/28/2013\)](#)

[League of Women Voters of PA Public Comment Submitted to the PCEA \(Philadelphia, 9/4/2013\)](#)

[Kay Kyungsun Yu, board member of Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action and former chairperson of Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania, Public Comment Submitted to the PCEA \(Philadelphia, 9/4/2013\)](#)

[Common Cause Pennsylvania Public Comment Submitted to the PCEA \(Philadelphia, 9/4/2013\)](#)

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