

Democracy at Risk: The 2004 Election in Ohio

Section XII
Recommendations for Future Action



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

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The right to vote and to have that vote accurately counted is the bedrock on which our democracy stands. Nothing is more fundamental to our freedom than our confidence in the integrity of our democratic institutions.

The Democratic Party will continue to work with Members of Congress, state lawmakers, local election officials, and community leaders to make sure that all voters maintain confidence in our system of elections.

“Democracy at Risk: The Ohio Election” report will be broadly distributed to members of Congress and other elected leaders, Democratic National Committee (DNC) officials, state party leaders and activists. We will also post our results on the official Voting Rights Institute (VRI) website to help educate citizens about what is at stake in the next election.

In addition, the Party will work with the appropriate officials and the grassroots community to update and reform our election laws. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

1. The Democratic Party must continue its efforts to monitor election law reform in all fifty states, the District of Columbia and territories.
2. States should be encouraged to codify into law all required election practices, including requirements for the adequate training of official poll workers.
3. States should adopt uniform and clear published standards for the distribution of voting equipment and the assignment of official pollworkers among precincts, to ensure adequate and nondiscriminatory access. These standards should be based on set ratios of numbers of machines and pollworkers per number of voters expected to turn out, and should be made available for public comment before being adopting.
4. States should adopt legislation to make clear and uniform the rules on voter registration.
5. The Democratic Party should monitor the processing of voter registrations by local election authorities on an ongoing basis to ensure the timely processing of registrations and changes, including both newly registered voters and voters who move within a jurisdiction or the state, and the Party should ask state Attorneys General to take action where necessary to force the timely updating of voter lists.

6. States should be urged to implement statewide voter lists in accordance with the Help America Vote Act (“HAVA”), the election reform law enacted by Congress in 2002 following the Florida debacle.
7. State and local jurisdictions should adopt clear and uniform rules on the use of, and the counting of, provisional ballots, and distribute them for public comment well in advance of each election day.
8. The Democratic Party should monitor the purging and updating of registered voter lists by local officials, and the Party should challenge, and ask state Attorneys General to challenge, unlawful purges and other improper list maintenance practices.
9. States should not adopt requirements that voters show identification at the polls, beyond those already required by federal law (requiring that identification be shown only by first time voters who did not show identification when registering.)
10. State Attorneys General and local authorities should vigorously enforce, to the full extent permitted by state law, a voter’s right to vote without showing identification.
11. Jurisdictions should be encouraged to use precinct-tabulated optical scan systems with a computer assisted device at each precinct, in preference to touchscreen (“direct recording equipment” or “DRE”) machines.
12. Touchscreen (DRE) machines should not be used until a reliable voter verifiable audit feature can be uniformly incorporated into these systems. In the event of a recount, the paper or other auditable record should be considered the official record.
13. Remaining punchcard systems should be discontinued.
14. States should ask state Attorneys General to challenge unfair or discriminatory distribution of equipment and resources where necessary, and the Democratic Party should bring litigation as necessary.
15. Voting equipment vendors should be required to disclose their source code so that it can be examined by third parties. No voting machine should have wireless connections or be able to connect to the Internet.
16. Any equipment used by voters to vote or by officials to tabulate the votes should be used exclusively for that purpose. That is particularly important for tabulating/aggregating computers.
17. States should adopt “no excuse required” standards for absentee voting.

18. States should make it easier for college students to vote in the jurisdiction in which their school is located.
19. States should develop procedures to ensure that voting is facilitated, without compromising security or privacy, for all eligible voters living overseas.
20. States should make voter suppression a criminal offense at the state level, in all states.
21. States should improve the training of pollworkers.
22. States should expend significantly more resources in educating voters on where, when and how to vote.
23. Partisan officials who volunteer to work for a candidate should not oversee or administer any elections.

The right to vote, the right to participate in the electoral system must never be compromised. Every American voter must have full confidence that all registered voters will be able to cast their votes without any impediments and that every valid vote will be counted.

Finally, this summer, America will mark the 40th anniversary of the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Before August 1965, poll taxes and literacy tests effectively muted the voices of so many and denied generations of African Americans a voice in the governance of their country. Three important provisions of the landmark civil rights act are set to expire in 2007. As Democrats we will work for their renewal and robust enforcement.

For more information on the Democratic National Committee and the Voting Rights Institute, please visit us at <http://www.democrats.org/vri/>

You may also write or call us at Voting Rights Institute, Democratic National Committee, 430 S Capitol Street, SE Wash DC 20003, (202) 863-8000.