



One Year Later: Results of 2004 Voter Fraud Investigations Give Vote Groups a Clean Slate

Community Group Vindicated as Baseless Lawsuits, Investigations Collapse

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Today, Project Vote congratulated the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) on the dismissal of the third and final voter registration fraud lawsuit brought against the group in 2004. ACORN, in partnership with Project Vote, ran the largest non-partisan voter outreach program in the 2004 election cycle, registering 1.15 million low-income and minority citizens in 26 states and contacting 2.3 million through Get-Out-the-Vote efforts. In 2004, several politically motivated law firms brought baseless charges of voter registration fraud against ACORN in an effort to inhibit its work to register low-income and minority voters.

“For twenty years, we have worked with ACORN to ensure the voices of low-income and minority Americans are heard at the ballot box,” said Holli Holliday, National Director of Project Vote. “We have complete confidence in ACORN’s quality control process and are not at all surprised these lawsuits and investigations have collapsed. Today, we celebrate this as a victory for voters.”

One year after the contentious 2004 election, it is clear that politically motivated law firms and organizations leveled unfounded allegations of fraud against ACORN with the goal of tarnishing the community group’s reputation and inhibiting its work. In recent months, three highly publicized legal challenges brought against ACORN staff have been dismissed or withdrawn for lack of evidence. In Ohio, a lawsuit funded by the conservative Free Enterprise Coalition and litigated by the law firm of Shumaker, Loop and Kendrick collapsed on October 28. Two Florida lawsuits, based solely on claims by convicted felon and ex-ACORN employee Mac Start and litigated by Rothstein, Rosenfeldt, Adler of Fort Lauderdale, were dismissed with prejudice. Stuart admitted to making false statements against ACORN.

“This outcome is vindication for our dedicated staff and volunteers who worked around the clock in the 2004 election to make sure the voices of low-income Americans were heard,” said Tamecka Pierce of ACORN. “The conservative groups who leveled false charges should be held accountable – this kind of harassment is clearly designed to intimidate community groups who register people of color.”

Further, criminal investigations responding to allegations of voter fraud recently ended in Colorado, Wisconsin, Florida, and Ohio after finding no evidence of wrongdoing by ACORN or any pervasive voter fraud. In Wisconsin, U.S. Attorney Steve Biskupic, a Republican appointed by President Bush in 2004, concluded, “We don’t see a massive conspiracy to alter the election in Milwaukee, one way or another.” In Ohio, a year-long federal, state, and local investigation ended with no federal indictments. “Our



investigation is closed. No one was charged...the federal investigation is closed,” said Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Edwards in Cleveland.

ACORN uses a comprehensive quality control program developed by Project Vote. Separate quality control staff visually review the hundreds of collected voter registration applications to identify incomplete or suspicious applications, and then call applicants to verify the information on the applications. Before completed applications are submitted to election officials, they are photocopied (where allowed) and filed in order to create records to assist in the investigation of any concerns. ACORN maintains a zero-tolerance policy against fraud and, by implementing strong quality control procedures, is able to identify and terminate any employee submitting fraudulent registrations.

Project Vote and ACORN’s comprehensive voter outreach methodology is regarded as one of the industry’s best. In 2004, thousands of volunteers and staff helped register 1.15 million citizens in 26 states, and reached 2.3 million through Get-Out-the-Vote efforts. ACORN and Project Vote staff registered voters at high-traffic locations, such as grocery stores, farmers markets, and concerts, and contacted registered voters with reminders to vote by going door-to-door and calling them on the phone. The results were impressive: Project Vote and ACORN increased turnout by an average of 24% over 2000 turnout in targeted precincts, including an increase of 35% in Pennsylvania (19 points higher than state turnout increase) and 44.7% in Maricopa County, Arizona (12 points higher than the county increase overall).

“We are pleased to put these false accusations behind us and continue our work for voting rights, more affordable housing, better schools, and access to health care,” said Pierce. “However, we know we will face attacks in the future from those who are scared that our good work brings power and a voice to our communities.”

Project Vote is the leading technical assistance and direct service provider to the voter engagement and civic participation community. Since its founding in 1982, Project Vote has provided professional training, management, evaluation and technical services on a broad continuum of key issues related to voter engagement and voter participation activities in low-income and minority communities.

www.projectvote.org

ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, is the nation's largest community organization of low- and moderate-income families, working together for social justice and stronger communities.

Since 1970, ACORN has grown to more than 175,000 member families in 75 cities.

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