

The Pennsylvania Voting Rights Coalition

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Coalition launches 2013 Voter ID education & awareness campaign

Highlights NAACP Rally for Justice at state Capitol tomorrow as legal challenge to restrictive Voter ID law goes to trial on Monday, July 15th

PHILADELPHIA – The Pennsylvania Voting Rights Coalition today launched its 2013 nonpartisan, state-wide campaign to keep all Pennsylvanians informed with accurate information about the state's restrictive Voter ID law. The launch of the education campaign took place just days before a legal challenge to the state's controversial Voter ID law is heard in Commonwealth Court, and coalition supporters urged the public to attend the trial as well as a voting rights rally at the state Capitol on Thursday at 1:00 p.m.

The public education campaign of the coalition, formerly known as the Pennsylvania Voter ID Coalition, was announced at a morning press conference held at the offices of National Union of Hospital and Healthcare Employees 1199C, featuring organizational representatives from the AFL-CIO, NAACP, senior advocacy groups, African-American sororities and fraternities, faith communities, and a diverse array of civic and community organizations. Components of the campaign include a nonpartisan voter registration drive and a series of Voter ID assistance clinics that will be presented in communities throughout the state. The clinics, which begin in August, will provide voters with accurate information about the status of the Voter ID law and assist individuals in obtaining ID to meet their specific needs.

"The recent decision by the United States Supreme Court, striking down an important part of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, has created an even greater urgency for voters in Pennsylvania to stand united against attempts to take away our right to vote. We will not go back!" said Joe Certaine, the operations chief of the Pennsylvania Voting Rights Coalition.

Jerome Whyatt Mondesire, President of the Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches, invited supporters of voting rights to attend a rally on Thursday afternoon, from 1:00 to 3:00, in the Main Rotunda of the State Capitol in Harrisburg.

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[Coalition launches 2013 Voter ID education campaign – CONTINUED]

The rally is taking place only a few blocks from the Pennsylvania Judicial Center, 601 Commonwealth Ave, Harrisburg, where Commonwealth Court Judge Bernard McGinley will begin hearing arguments on Monday, July 15th, at 1:00 p.m., regarding the constitutionality of the state's restrictive Voter ID Law. The lawsuit seeks to overturn the Voter ID statute which was enacted by Gov. Tom Corbett and the Republican-controlled General Assembly just months before the 2012 Presidential election. The legal challenge is being argued by Advancement Project, the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, the law firm of Arnold & Porter, and the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia.

Participants in the Voting Rights Coalition's press conference commended the work of the legal team in securing an injunction blocking enforcement of the law for the 2012 general election, and which was extended for the 2013 primary elections in May. In addition to seeking a permanent ban on enforcement of the law under the Pennsylvania Constitution, the attorneys will also be seeking an extension of the temporary injunction for the 2013 general elections. The coalition will adapt its public education message based on Judge McGinley's eventual decision, and it encourages defenders of voting rights to attend the Commonwealth Court hearing, which is expected to continue into a second week.

The Pennsylvania Voter ID Coalition was formed in March 2012 in anticipation of passage of the restrictive Voter ID provision requiring voters to present state-mandated photo identification before being able to cast a ballot. The coalition engaged in public awareness and voter education efforts across Pennsylvania from March through Election Day 2012. The coalition recently renamed itself "The Pennsylvania Voting Rights Coalition" to indicate that its public education efforts on Voter ID are part of a broader movement to defend and advance voting rights in the state.

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