MINNEAPOLIS REGIONAL HEARING
(Minneapolis and Wisconsin)

University of Minnesota Law School
Minneapolis, Minnesota
February 25, 2014

NATIONAL COMMISSIONER
Biko Baker, Executive Director, League of Young Voters; national leader in youth civil engagement programs

GUEST COMMISSIONERS
Lawrence R. Jacobs, Professor, University of Minnesota
Mark Ritchie, Minnesota Secretary of State
Warren Spannaus, former Attorney General of Minnesota; former Partner, Dorsey and Whitney LLP
Wenda Weekes Moore, former Trustee, W. K. Kellogg Foundation; member, Kellogg Trust; Regent Emeritus, University of Minnesota

PANELISTS
Neil Albrecht, Executive Director, City of Milwaukee Election Commission
Alicia Boehme, Disability Rights Wisconsin
Analiese Eicher, Programs and Development Director, One Wisconsin Now, One Wisconsin Institute
Jerry Franck, Chair, Common Cause Minnesota
Mike Griffin, FairVote Minnesota
Mark Halvorson, Citizens for Election Integrity Minnesota
Pamela Hoopes, Legal Director and Deputy Director, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Minnesota Disability Law Center
Andrea Kaminski, Executive Director, League of Women Voters of Wisconsin
Jeff Martin, St. Paul NAACP
Abdirizak Said, Community Organizer, Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council Research Group
Nolan Schmidt, Minnesota Public Interest
John Shaw, Board for People with Developmental Disabilities
Kathy Tomsich, League of Women Voters of Minnesota
Blong Yang, Minneapolis City Council member

PUBLIC TESTIMONY
Catherine Dorr, Citizens for Election Integrity of Minnesota
John Hottinger, former Minnesota State Senator
Mark Threat
Virginia Volker

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
Joshua Esmay, Criminal Records Staff Attorney, Council on Crime and Justice
Lorraine Minnite, Associate Professor of Public Policy and administration, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey-Camden
MINNEAPOLIS REGIONAL HEARING HIGHLIGHTS

On February 25, 2014, approximately 75 voters, activists and voting rights advocates from Minnesota and Wisconsin gathered at University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minn. to share their experiences of the voting challenges they continue to face in Minnesota and Wisconsin at a hearing convened by the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Witnesses testified about numerous issues creating barriers to equal participation in the democratic process, including efforts to curtail early voting in Wisconsin and several instances of voting discrimination at specific polling places in Minnesota.

I. Curtailing Early Voting in Wisconsin

Neil Albrecht of the Milwaukee Election Commission, Analiese Eicher of One Wisconsin Now and Andrea Kaminski of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin discussed recent efforts to limit early voting in Wisconsin. Legislation passed in 2011 cut early in-person voting from three weeks and three weekends to two weeks and one weekend and prohibited city clerks’ offices from offering early voting after 5 p.m. on the Friday before the election.¹ Older legisla-
tion prohibits municipalities from having more than one early voting site. The witnesses also discussed additional legislation that was subsequently enacted into law, which prohibits early voting on weekends and limits the hours when early voting can occur.

Albrecht indicated that poor and minority citizens tend to access early in-person absentee voting at higher rates than the general population. Milwaukee, which has a high percentage of poor and minority voters, has had extensive evening and weekend early voting hours. Thus, according to Albrecht, restrictions on early voting have a significant impact on poor and minority voters in the city.

II. Alleged Polling Place Discrimination in Minnesota

Jerry Franck, of Common Cause Minnesota, testified about several instances of differential treatment of minority voters that Election Protection in Minnesota allegedly learned about in 2012. According to Franck, election judges in Golden Valley asked African-American and Latino voters for proof of citizenship, but not Caucasian voters. Franck also stated that some election judges in St. Paul denied Hmong voters language assistance and threatened to call the police on volunteers attempting to assist those voters.

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2 Wis. Stat. § 6.86; Wis. Stat. § 6.855