

ILLINOIS STATE HEARING

DePaul University College of Law
Chicago, Illinois
June 12, 2013

GUEST COMMISSIONERS

Ben Blustein, Partner, Miner, Barnhill & Galland, P.C.	Marissa Liebling, Staff Attorney, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Jon Greenbaum, Chief Counsel, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law	Mary Schaafsma, Executive Director, League of Women Voters, Illinois

PANELISTS

Jeff Cummings, Miner, Barnhill & Galland, P.C.	Maryam Judar, Community Lawyer, Citizen Advocacy Center
Ami Gandhi, Executive Director, South Asian American Policy and Research Institute	Andy Kang, Legal Director, Asian Americans Advancing Justice
Brian Gladstein, Director of Operations and Development, Common Cause Illinois	Dan Madden, Legal Advisor to David Orr, Cook County Clerk
Lance Gough, Executive Director, Chicago Board of Elections	Melissa Picciola, Staff Attorney, Equip for Equality
Ruth Greenwood, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law	Eve Rips, Election Protection volunteer
	Jorge Sanchez, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Nana Ofori Atta, voter and Election Protection Volunteer	Marth Trawinski
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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Rev. Janette C. Wilson, Esq., Senior Advisor to
Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr., RainbowPUSH
Coalition Inc.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS (NOT EXHAUSTIVE)

Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
Under Law
DePaul University College of Law
Kirkland and Ellis
Miner, Barnhill and Galland

ILLINOIS STATE HEARING HIGHLIGHTS

On June 12, 2013, voting rights advocates, voters, election officials and members of the public gathered at DePaul University College of Law in Chicago, Illinois for a hearing convened by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Approximately 50 people attended the hearing, which focused mainly on issues of election administration, though it did include testimony regarding barriers faced by voters with limited English proficiency.

Several jurisdictions in Illinois are covered by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act and are therefore required to provide election materials in certain languages other than English.¹ Jorge Sanchez, staff attorney at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund; Ami Gandhi, executive director of the South Asian American Policy and Research Institute (SAAPRI); and Andy Kang, legal director for Asian Americans Advancing Justice, testified about this requirement. These witnesses testified that, in general, the jurisdictions in Illinois that are covered by Section 203 do provide the translated materials as required. There were problems, however. Gandhi testified that SAAPRI conducted a survey of hundreds of South-Asian voters as they came out of the polls on Election Day in 2012. The vast majority of those surveyed reported that English was not their first language, and over 20 percent reported that they understood English less than very well. Only about seven percent, however, reported using a translated ballot or receiving assistance from a bilingual poll worker.² Gandhi concluded that voters were not made aware that these resources were available to them. Similarly, Kang testified that he observed several polling places where the translated materials were on a table out of view of the voters; if voters did not know to ask for the translated materials, they would not receive them.

¹ See, Bureau of Census, *Voting Rights Act Amendments of 2006, Determinations under Section 203* http://www.census.gov/rdo/pdf/2011_26293.pdf.

² See, *The Asian American Community Engagement Project: Voting Trends and Access in 2012*, SAAPRI: <http://www.saapri.org/content/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/SAAPRI-Voting-Trends-Report.pdf>