

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

Nolan Schmidt, Minnesota Public Interest

Research Group

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

Karyn L. Rotker, Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU of Wisconsin

Grace Wachlarowicz, Director of Elections and Voter Services, City of Minneapolis

Ann Gibbons, Attorney, formerly an Attorney in the Office of Judge J. Foy Guin, Jr., U.S.

District Court for the Northern District Court of Alabama

Geraldine K. Jackson

Richard Rutledge, former City Council Candidate, Birmingham

Hank Sanders, Alabama State Senator

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS (NOT EXHAUSTIVE):

ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation

Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

Citizens for Election Integrity Minnesota

Common Cause Minnesota

Disability Rights Wisconsin

Dorsey & Whitney LLP

FairVote Minnesota

League of Women Voters Minnesota

League of Women Voters Wisconsin

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid/Minnesota Disability Law Center

Milwaukee NAACP

Minnesota Public Interest Research Group

One Wisconsin Institute

One Wisconsin Now

Perkins Coie LLP

St. Paul NAACP

Take Action Minnesota

Voces de la Frontera

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-

¹ 2011 Wisconsin Act 23

tion prohibits municipalities from having more than one early voting site.² 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.

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