

Press Conference 11-28-11 with MALDEF, NAACP, LULAC and Southwest Voter Registration Project

Statement by Anita Privett, Advocacy VP LWV-TX Declaring Opposition to Attorney General Abbott's request of a stay of implementation of temporary redistricting maps

The LWV-TX has been a strong advocate for the voters of Texas for more than 90 years.

In 2011 Texans have watched a long and divisive legislative redistricting process. Because of a history of discrimination against minorities in Texas, the redistricting maps passed by the Legislature must be pre-cleared by either the Department of Justice (DOJ) or DC District Court before taking effect. DOJ has expressed concerns that the maps drawn by the Texas Legislature do not meet the requirements of the law. The DC Court has ordered a full trial to determine whether the maps are acceptable.

With the Texas primary elections approaching, this past week the San Antonio federal court ordered that temporary maps be used for the 2012 elections while the DC District Court trial over pre-clearance of the Legislature's redistricting maps proceeds. The time needed to develop temporary maps has already delayed the start of the filing period for candidates as late as possible and still allow enough time for all involved to prepare for the primary elections. Election day is March 6 with early voting scheduled to begin on Feb. 21st.

Now Texas Attorney General Abbott is asking the Supreme Court to stay the order for the temporary maps. LWV-TX hopes the Supreme Court denies the request promptly so that uncertainty is resolved and preparations for the primary elections can go forward.

Orderly elections require much work by many. Candidates need to know district lines to assess the possibility of a run for office, and then to file for those offices, raise money, and mount a campaign to let voters know who they are and what they stand for. Voters must be informed of the new districts and have access to information about candidates from sources like nonpartisan LWV Voters Guides. Election officials need to register voters, contract for polling locations, print and mail voter registration cards with district numbers and hire election workers. They need to prepare and print ballots for timely delivery to military and overseas voters and program equipment in time for early voting. As currently scheduled there are only 12 weeks in which all of this activity must occur.

Attorney General Abbott's request for a Supreme Court stay would effectively delay the primary elections. It is the view of the LWV-TX that the required legal procedures have been followed by those seeking fair representation for minorities in Texas. The San Antonio court has developed temporary maps that will allow the primary elections to proceed while awaiting a final ruling by the DC District Court. **It is time to let the elections go forward with the temporary maps. The people of Texas are best served if the ruling of the San Antonio court stands so that elections can move forward without further delays.**