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Strong Enforcement Of Voter Protections Needed In Nevada To Stop "Bullies At The Ballot Box"

New study grades Nevada's ability to counter partisan poll watchers and wrongful voter challenges

[READ "BULLIES AT THE BALLOT BOX" HERE.](#)

As the elections approach, strong enforcement of voter protections is needed to prevent attempts to block Nevada voters from casting their ballot, according to a report released today by voting rights groups Demos and Common Cause. The study, "Bullies at the Ballot Box: Protecting the Freedom to Vote from Wrongful Challenges and Intimidation" focuses on voter protection laws in Nevada and nine other states where elections are expected to be close, or where large challenger operations are expected or have taken place during recent elections.

The study concludes that Nevada generally has satisfactory laws on the books when it comes to voter protection, but that there is plenty of work yet to be done to protect voters from voter intimidation and attempts to kick registered voters off the rolls.

True the Vote and other Tea Party-affiliated groups are reportedly recruiting 1 million volunteers to object to the qualifications of voters in targeted communities on and before Election Day, according to the study. These volunteers are being rallied to block, in their own words, the "illegal alien vote" and "the food stamp army." Their stated goal is to make the experience of voting "like driving and seeing the police behind you."

"Voting must be free, fair and accessible to all, and voters should know their rights," said Common Cause President Bob Edgar. "It is important to maintain the integrity of our election system, and that means that candidates, parties and political activists should be focused on persuading and turning out voters, not bullying them or trying to manipulate the law to freeze them out of our democracy."

Nevada receives high marks for its laws that should protect voters from wrongful challenges to their right to vote before Election Day, though it is mixed for protections from wrongful challenges on Election Day. Nevada has very good protections for voters from intimidation by partisan poll watchers on Election Day inside and outside the polls:

- For challenges to a voter's eligibility made before Election Day, Nevada requires voter challenges to be in writing and based on personal knowledge. Notice to the challenged voter is required, and challenges can be resolved by affirming eligibility at the polls. These provisions are helpful in protecting voting rights.
- For challenges to a voter's eligibility on Election Day, challenges must be in writing and based on personal knowledge. However, the procedures for resolving a challenge are complicated, and Nevada should clarify that the challenger bears the burden of proof in showing a voter is not eligible to vote.
- Observers in Nevada are prohibited from photographing, recording, or talking to voters. It is prohibited to interfere with the conduct of voting, and there is authority to remove observers who do. In Nevada it is a felony to interfere with the conduct of an election.

The ten states reviewed in “Bullies at the Ballot Box” are Colorado, Florida, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia. In addition to assessing the current state laws, the report provides recommendations to protect citizens from these large-scale, well-organized efforts to intimidate or block them from voting.

“It is important that all participants understand the rules and respect the right of all eligible Americans to vote free of intimidation or obstruction. We want to minimize the risk of positive civic engagement moving into disrupting the orderly conduct of elections,” said Liz Kennedy. “Unwarranted challenges to voters’ eligibility can lead to problems at the polls for everyone seeking to cast a ballot by depleting resources, distracting officials, and leading to longer lines. They threaten the fair administration of elections and the fundamental freedom to vote.”

“Voting is one of our most fundamental rights,” said Common Cause’s Edgar. “No eligible voter should be blocked from casting a ballot, and the entire voting rights community is mobilized to protect voters’ rights.”

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Common Cause and Demos are part of the Election Protection coalition, the nation’s largest non-partisan voter protection coalition. Common Cause and coalition allies are recruiting and organizing non partisan Election Day monitors to help voters understand the voting rules in their state and report any and all efforts to discourage or intimidate voters. Through the 1-866-OUR-VOTE hotline and a comprehensive field deployment, Election Protection helps voters overcome obstacles to the ballot box while collecting data for meaningful reform. Over 100 organizations have joined forces to monitor polling places across the country and provide aid, including legal assistance, to voters who encounter obstacles to voting.