

## **“New State Voting Laws III: Protecting Voting Rights in the Heartland”**

Monday, May 7, 2012 at 9:30 a.m., at  
the Carl B. Stokes United States Court House, 801 West Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113.

### **Opening Statement by David G. Arredondo**

Good Morning Everyone.

Today I come before you to speak in favor of supporting fair and honest elections for all American citizens. It is our civic duty to ensure the integrity of our electoral process at the Federal and state levels. Voting is a privilege and a responsibility

Our current system is actually a composite of fifty systems that vary from state to state. Some require photo identification, others do not. Some allow for no-fault absentee voting. Others do not. Some allow for Early voting or internet voting. Currently 16 different states have enacted a photo-ID mandate. Fifteen states, including Ohio, require voters to show some form of personal identification such as a utility bill or a bank statement.

It would be helpful if we had a more uniform system of voting, especially when federal elections like the election of a president are concerned. However, only Congress and the Senate can make such a change. In an effort to make voting “more easy” and “more accessible,” Congress and state legislatures have lowered the bar for voter registration and the casting of ballots. Some proponents would have you believe that any law regulating elections is an attack on their constituents’ rights. Using that logic, voting should be extended unconditionally, year round, 24/7, to ensure that their candidates win. Fortunately, the vast majority of Americans do not agree with this premise.

At one time, America did have a voting system that that could be above suspicion of fraudulent registration and voting. But that system went out the door with the Motor Voter Law of 1993, enacted by a Democratic majority Congress and signed by President Bill Clinton. Through Motor Voter, it is possible for foreign nationals to vote. I was recently made aware that a former foreign student was registered to vote in Lorain County. This he was able to do when he happened to renew his drivers license and was offered the opportunity to register to vote. No proof of citizenship was required. Fortunately, he has never attempted to vote. American college students have the opportunity to hold multiple voting registrations in their home state as well as the state where they attend school. There is no way of cross checking these.

Allow me to share with you how it is possible to reform a one-time, pathologically corrupt voting system, that of Mexico’s. By no means do I suggest that our electoral system is as corrupt as Mexico’s was prior to 1996. I do however advocate a major reform of our current system.

Following the wide-spread corruption of the 1988 presidential race, all major parties agreed to the formation of a non-partisan, non-governmental, electoral commission that would conduct the voting process and ensure fair and honest elections.

In October, 1990, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) was created and set about the task of developing a system for federal and state elections through hard-fought reforms enacted in 1992, 1993, and 1994. The first presidential election under the new system in 2000 resulted in the election of the first non-PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) candidate, Vicente Fox, elected president since 1928 in probably the cleanest presidential election in Mexican history up to that time. In 2006, Felipe Calderon was elected president in a close election despite unfounded charges of fraud by his opponent.

The electoral system created by IFE is open and transparent. Every eligible Mexican citizen has a tamper-proof photo-ID card with a thumbprint and an embossed hologram. All voters are required to vote in their neighborhoods and in 2005, the law was amended to allow for "external," or out of country absentee voting. There is no such thing as a provisional ballot. All elections are held on Sundays. Mexico is a relatively poor country yet does not lower standards to allow for the poor to register and vote as is done in America. No excuses are made while setting a high standard for all with no discernible drop in voter participation by the lower economic classes. In 1994, voter registration stood at 45,279,053. In 2009, registration was 72,347,857.

The registration process requires all citizens to personally enroll. Applicants are photographed and fingerprinted and then required to personally return to collect their voting credential. Countries like Haiti and Iraq have adopted certain aspects of the Mexican electoral system to various degrees. The purple thumbs shown by Iraqi voters in their first free elections is a practice first employed in Mexico.

Americans can also learn a few things from an electoral system that is above reproach.