

The League of Women Voters

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2004 ELECTION IS IN DANGER: TOP FIVE RISKS TO ELIGIBLE VOTERS
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Steps Must Be Taken Immediately to Protect the Vote in November

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

[Lyndsey Farrington](#)

202-263-1332

WASHINGTON, DC - The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the civil rights community today announced the Top Five Risks to Eligible Voters in 2004 at a Washington, DC press conference. Speakers identified each of the top five risks and offered realistic steps that can be taken now to protect the 2004 vote.

"The 2004 election is in danger. We are here today to sound the alarm," stated Kay J. Maxwell, LWVUS president. "Effective steps must be taken immediately to protect the right to vote. Our nation cannot afford to have a replay of 2000, when voting systems failed to properly record voters' intent, when purging and other election practices undermined voter participation, and when millions of Americans questioned the outcome and legitimacy of the presidential election," Maxwell noted.

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Executive Director Wade Henderson addressed the first risk: voter registration problems. "Too often the voter registration applications are not promptly or properly forwarded to election officials from driver's license agencies and other agencies that provide voter registration opportunities," stated Henderson. "We need to assure that eligible citizens get registered," he said.

Hilary Shelton, chief of the NAACP's Washington bureau, talked about problems with purging. "Unfortunately, we have found too many instances in which individuals who are still eligible to vote are erroneously and improperly taken off the voter rolls," Shelton said. He urged eligible voters, "to remain ever vigilant and remain aware of our status and our rights."

Larry Gonzalez, speaking for the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO), laid out problems with the new ID requirement of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). "This provision was meant to prevent fraud, or so the theory goes, not confuse or discourage voters from participating. Yet, here we are just 160 days away from the next Presidential election and voters still do not know what the rules are," stated Gonzalez.

American Association for People with Disabilities Vice President Jim Dickson articulated problems with voting machines. "We have an underlying crisis in the way our country conducts elections. With antiquated equipment, when an election is close, it's anyone's guess who wins," noted Dickson. "Poll workers must be trained on the quirks of the machines in their districts."

Maxwell concluded by addressing the fifth risk: failure to count provisional ballots. "Provisional ballots are the safety net so that no voter coming to the polls will be turned away. This is the #1 good government reform that must be in place this November," said Maxwell. "This safeguard will

be worthless if the provisional ballot cast is never counted," she added.

"We believe the 2004 election is at risk. Many of the problems we saw in the 2000 election still have not been fully solved," noted Maxwell. "Election reform measures set by Congress in HAVA are not fully implemented. As the election draws near, it is vital that election officials and voters understand the risks that affect the right to vote," Maxwell said.

The [Top Five Risks to Eligible Voters in 2004](#), as well as solutions to each problem are available.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters
1730 M Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20036-4508
Phone: 202-429-1965
Fax: 202-429-0854
E-mail: info@lww.org

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