



***ACLU, NAACP OBJECT TO DISCRIMINATORY ELECTION  
ENFORCEMENT IN WISCONSIN***

**For Immediate Release: Sept. 17, 2008**

Contact:

Laurence Dupuis, Legal Director  
ACLU of Wisconsin, 414-272-4032, ext. 12

Henry Hamilton III, Executive Committee  
Milwaukee Branch NAACP, (414) 403-9082

The ACLU of Wisconsin and Milwaukee Branch of the NAACP are deeply troubled by the apparent discriminatory focus of the “election fraud” task force set up by Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen and Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm.

The formation of a voter fraud task force only in Milwaukee County reinforces an unsubstantiated perception that City of Milwaukee residents are more prone to commit election fraud. And, regardless of intent, a racial subtext is barely below the surface, given the fact that Milwaukee is the only majority-minority city in the state.

The truth is that voting irregularities can and do happen throughout Wisconsin - but when they do not occur in Milwaukee, they are called “mistakes” and not “fraud.” There was, for example, no law enforcement outcry when earlier this year we learned that hundreds of voters in Oconomowoc voted at the wrong polling place for years, in ways that likely influenced local election outcomes. There is no evidence that voting errors in Milwaukee are any more grounded in “fraud” than were the voting errors in Oconomowoc.

Nor does unlawful voting only occur in Milwaukee. To the contrary, the clear majority of allegations of vote fraud in 2006 occurred outside the city of Milwaukee, in dozens of communities around the state.

The ACLU and NAACP also question involvement by the Milwaukee Police Department in any election task force until such time as there is public disclosure of the role of officers in publishing a biased report earlier this year on the 2004 election making recommendations they had no authority to make, without the approval of their superiors.

The much ballyhoed, but practically non-existent, phenomenon of voter fraud does not warrant the development of a “task force” anywhere, but certainly not just in Milwaukee. Indeed, as law enforcement officials recognized this morning, the City Election Commission has made great strides in promoting fair and transparent elections, and the creation of a “fraud” task force only undermines faith in those elections. State and local officials should focus time and resources on facilitating election administration, not frustrating the rights of persons lawfully entitled to vote.

—end—