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NEWS

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New Report from The Century Foundation Shows the Way to Reform New York’s Election Law and Meet New Federal Standards

April 22, New York City—A new report from The Century Foundation offers a roadmap for using a new federal law to improve New York State’s broken voting system. Former New York State Attorney General Robert Abrams and attorney and election expert Arthur Fried are the authors of the Century Foundation Report, **“The Help America Vote Act – Impact and Potential for New York.”**

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), signed by President Bush last October, requires a major overhaul of the way Americans register and vote by mandating the states to meet several voting system standards and providing them with substantial funding to improve voting procedures. This report reviews each provision of HAVA, interprets them from a legal perspective, and describes how they provisions might best be complied with and/or implemented in New York. Based on their analysis of the legislation and extensive knowledge of New York election law and procedures, the authors make recommendations for innovative changes and improvements in the state’s election practices.

“It is imperative that New York take advantage of the passage of HAVA to make the capital investment in new voting machines, training poll workers, compiling a statewide computerized voter registration list, and making a comprehensive effort to reach out to voters to have them register,” said Robert Abrams. “The disaster at the polls in Florida in November 2000 is emblematic of what happens in New York City each Election Day. The disgraceful confusion at polling places, low turnouts, and disenfranchisement of those eligible to vote must end.”

New York State has created a task force to develop a plan for complying with the new law. Especially given the controversy over the appointment of that group and the way it is going about its work, the authors hope that its members, the Governor, the New York State Legislature, election administrators, and other interested groups will seriously consider the analysis and recommendations in this report. Highlights of the analysis and recommendations in the report include:

- **New York State must replace ALL of its lever machines**
- **The State should have a single kind of voting machine statewide**
- **Federal funds won’t be enough to improve our election system -- New York State must pay its share**
- **New York State should set its own benchmarks for voting success that go beyond what HAVA requires**
- **There should be uniform voter education and poll worker materials throughout New York State**
- **New York State should take steps, including passing legislation, to get media assistance with voter education**
- **Better pay, wider recruitment, and more flexibility will improve the quality of poll workers**
- **New York State must develop a centralized statewide voter list, not just link local lists**
- **New York State needs to ensure new ID rules do not have a chilling effect on voting and registration**
- **New York State must take steps to ensure that voters, including those without ID, are allowed to cast provisional ballots**

“This is a once in a generation opportunity to replace our voting technology. We must take great care to obtain a voting system that maximizes the ability of all voters to cast ballots and ensure that they are accurately counted,” said Arthur Fried.

The report is available on The Century Foundation web site www.tcf.org. Robert Abrams and Arthur Fried are available to discuss the report and to offer commentary on the process of the New York State HAVA Task Force. Contact Christy Hicks at (212) 452-7723 or hicks@tcf.org for more information.

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