

November 5, 2012

Dear Governors:

As the President of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the leader of the Election Protection Coalition, I am writing regarding an urgent and important matter.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, first responders, Red Cross staff and volunteers, and utility repair crews ("first responders") from each state have been sent to New York, New Jersey and other states impacted by the hurricane. All Americans are grateful for the assistance of these brave individuals.

Because there first responders and others are still helping Americans in other states, these first responders will not be able to vote in person on Election Day, November 6th. Additionally, because they responded so quickly, many were not able to request absentee ballots through the normal procedures. We are concerned that these first responders will be unable to exercise their fundamental right to vote simply because they have responded to the emergency calls for their assistance after Hurricane Sandy. We have received a number of calls to the Election Protection hotline, 1-866-OUR-VOTE, from first responders in your state who are concerned that they will lose their right to vote because they are helping other Americans in great need.

We have also received a call from Matthew Turner, the coordinator of restoration efforts in New Jersey. He informed us that there are 8,000 out-of-state workers in New Jersey, and their foreman instructed him that if a system is not implemented to allow them to vote, those who can get home before Election Day will return home at the end of their shifts today and not return to the relief efforts in New Jersey. We are in the process of confirming with Mr. Turner that he will help facilitate efforts to help ensure that any procedures that you implement are communicated to the first responders so that they can vote. For the good of those affected by the Hurricane, and the good of those first responders who need to vote, it is vital that options are made available to them to vote.

In these extraordinary circumstances, we ask that your state make options available for first responders and others who have been deployed in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy to exercise their fundamental right to vote. These options may include permitting first responders to vote as overseas voters, loosening rules on Federal Write-in Ballots, or allowing access to

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emergency absentee ballots if your state allows. The votes of these first responders should be counted for each office or initiative for which they are eligible to vote.

Due to the urgency of the situation, we respectfully request that you take immediate action. Please contact Alana Kuhn by email at akuhn@lawyerscommittee.org or by phone at 202-799-4959 to let us know your response and help coordinate efforts to allow first responders to vote.

Thank you,

Barbara Arnwine
President and Executive Director
Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

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