

## MAKING EVERY VOTE COUNT in 2008

The 2000 election led to the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), which has caused changes to the voting procedures used in previous elections. Some of these changes, however well-intentioned, as well as changes in related state laws, could actually result in voters “losing” their vote unless the correct procedures are followed. The following materials are provided to help make sure every vote counts in 2008.

### The New “Basics”

- **A provisional ballot is a last resort – vote a regular ballot if at all possible.** If an election judge or clerk questions the eligibility of a voter or suggests that the voter cast a provisional ballot, try to find out what can be done to cast a regular ballot, because the majority of provisional ballots will not be counted. For example, if a voter is not on the rolls at one polling place, that voter may be on the rolls in a different precinct, where he or she could cast a regular ballot. Or something as simple as going back home to get any necessary ID may allow the voter to cast a regular ballot. Do not cast a “hasty” provisional ballot unless there's no alternative – or no time (e.g. 6:45 pm) – available.
- **Bring Your Voter registration card or another valid ID with you,** including a government-issued ID, school ID, utility bill, phone bill, or paycheck with your name and current street address (a more complete list is included in this packet). Under HAVA, if you're a newly registered voter and did not provide an ID when you registered by mail, it will be required when you go to the polls. If you have a current voter registration card and are on the voter rolls when you go to vote, you should not be asked for additional ID, but it's better to play it safe.
- **Vote Early or vote early in the day on Election Day.** In most cases at most polling places, there will not be a problem with voters being accepted to vote. However, the earlier you vote, the more time you have to deal with any problems that may otherwise keep you from voting a regular ballot – and you can avoid discouraging long lines later in the day.
- **Locate your correct polling place before Election Day.** Knowing where you are supposed to vote avoids any mistake or confusion that could deny your right to cast a regular ballot, and it saves time.
- **Learn How to Use Voting Equipment Before You Vote.** Many local election officials provide materials or information on websites that help voters learn how to use new voting systems. And at the polling place, every voter has the right to ask election officials any necessary questions to clearly understand the process, including how to use the voting machine.
- **Check to Make Sure Your Ballot is Marked Correctly.** When you have marked your ballot, take the time to double check and see that it is correct, to make sure your vote counts
- **ASK, ASK, ASK.** Poll workers are there to help you. They'll show you how to work the machines, and if you're at the wrong polling place, they should tell you how to get to the right one. Every polling place should also have a posted list of your voting rights, and instructions for filing a complaint if your rights have been violated.
- **Know your rights.** If you're an eligible voter, you have the following rights:

- If your name is not on the official voter list but you believe you are eligible to vote in that precinct, even if an election official challenges your vote, you have the right to cast a "provisional ballot."
- If you're in line when the polls close, you should stay in line because you're entitled to vote.
- In many states, your employer must allow you time to vote at some point during the day. You can't be fired for being late due to long polling lines.
- You have the right to vote without being intimidated by anyone. Unless they have a court order, no one except an election judge or clerk has the right to talk to you in a polling place or in any way impede your access to a polling place. This restriction applies to poll watchers, law enforcement officers, and state or federal elections inspectors as well as campaign workers.
- **If you encounter a problem, write down the facts immediately.** If specific individuals challenge your right to vote, intimidate voters, or interfere with the process, get their names and write down exactly what happened, including time of day, descriptions of the people involved, and specific details you can remember.
- **Report problems immediately.** Voter suppression, intimidation, and fraud can deny voters' rights and change the outcome of an election, but we can not "fix a problem" in time unless it is reported.

## **TO REPORT PROBLEMS, CALL:**

Texas Democratic Party is 1-512-478-9800