



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 15, 2012

## NAACP Brings U.S. Election Law Before United Nations

The United Nations Human Rights Council, comprised of human rights violators like Saudi Arabia, China, and Cuba, has turned its attention to American election laws. Ironically, the council is investigating the impact of American election laws on minorities in the United States, even as some of the Council's member nations have only just recently permitted women the right to vote, and Saudi Arabia still bars women from voting completely.



Fox News reports, "Officials from the NAACP are presenting their case against U.S. voter ID laws, arguing to the international diplomats that the requirements disenfranchise voters and suppress the minority vote."

The NAACP is opposed to the new voting laws approved by some states that require voters to show identification before voting.

Eight states have passed voter ID laws in the past year, while voter ID proposals are currently awaiting approval in 32 other states. The Obama administration has already acted against South Carolina and Texas from enacting their voter ID laws.

The *Miami Herald* [explains](#) that groups like the NAACP have a vested interest in some of the laws being considered: "Other changes adopted or under consideration by states include restricting voter registration drives by third-party groups such as the League of Women Voters and the NAACP; curtailing or eliminating early voting; doing away with same-day voter registration; and rescinding the right to vote of convicted felons who have served their time."

According to a study conducted by the New York University's Brennan Center for Justice, voter ID laws "may sharply tilt the political terrain for the 2012 calendar" because it would restrict access to 5 million people, mostly elderly, young, and low-income voters.

The NAACP is concerned because 21 million Americans do not possess government-issued IDs, and of that 21 million, the NAACP estimates 25 percent are African American.

"This really is a tactic that undercuts the growth of your democracy," said Hillary Shelton, the NAACP's senior vice president for advocacy, about voter photo ID requirements.

Shelton went on to say that the photo ID law "undercuts the integrity of our government, if you allow it to happen. It's tricky, it's a sleight of hand. We're seeing it happen here and we don't want it to happen to you, and we are utilizing the U.N. as a tool to make sure that we are able to share that with those countries all over the world."

"It was in 1947 that W.E.B. Du Bois delivered his speech and appealed to the world at the U.N.," NAACP president Benjamin Todd Jealous said Thursday. "Now, like then, the principal concern is voting



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rights. The past year more states in this country have passed more laws pushing more voters out of the ballot box than any point since Jim Crow.”

While Jealous contends that the Human Rights Council has no real authority over the United States, he is hoping that the maneuver will provoke international pressure.

“The power of the U.N. on state governments historically is to shame them and to put pressure on the U.S. government to bring them into line with global standards for democracy, best practices for democracy, that’s where we are,” he said. “There are plenty of examples — segregation of the U.S. to apartheid in South Africa to the death penalty here in the U.S. — of global outrage having an impact.”

Jealous brought before the UN panel a convicted felon as well as a University of Texas student who may be unable to vote because Texas law mandates voters show government-approved photo identification.

Fox News reports:

Kemba Smith Pradia, was convicted of a drug-related offense and is concerned that if she moves back to Virginia from the Midwest, state law will block her voting because of her record, even though she was granted clemency by President [Bill Clinton](#).

A second American, Austin Alex, is a Texas Christian University student. The NAACP says he is worried that he will be barred from voting because he only holds an out-of-state driver’s license and a non-government student ID, not a Texas issued photo ID.

The Justice Department is also scrutinizing some of the new voter ID laws under the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which mandates approval of any changes made to voting laws in 16, mostly southern, states because those states have a history of racial discrimination. However, the Justice Department has lost some credibility in its role to ensure that voting rights are protected after failing to pursue the 2008 case of voter intimidation against the New Black Panther Party.

Supporters of the new law believe that the voter ID laws will ensure the integrity of the vote, preventing illegal aliens from taking part of the process, and that the NAACP is making an outrageous jump.

“The NAACP can appeal to whatever body it chooses to — the U.N. doesn’t run our elections,” said Catherine Engelbrecht, president of True the Vote, a tea party-founded anti-voter fraud group that’s seeking to mobilize thousands of volunteers to work as poll watchers and to validate existing voter-registration lists. “It has been talked to death whether or not (requiring) ID disenfranchises anyone.

Likewise, states that pass the voter ID laws have judicial backing. In 2008, the United States Supreme Court upheld the voter ID law enacted in Indiana.

Some critics note the irony of the NAACP’s appeal to the UN Human Rights Council. Several Arab nations that belong to the UN HRC only recently granted the right to vote to women in their countries, including Kuwait (2005) and Qatar (2003). In Saudi Arabia, women are still unable to vote, though the Saudi government recently announced it would grant women the right to vote, effective in 2015.

“The idea that this is a human rights abuse is ridiculous,” said Hans von Spakovsky, a voter fraud expert and senior legal fellow at the conservative [Heritage Foundation](#), in Washington, D.C.

“The UN allowing this to take place under their roof makes them, unfortunately, complicit in what really is a publicity stunt by the NAACP, and I think it wastes their time, when they should be going after real and sustained human rights abuses like the things going on in horrible places, like [North Korea](#).”

As a supporter of voter ID laws, Spakovsky contends that bringing American election laws before the



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UN is both hypocritical and offensive.

Spakovsky asserts that asking the UN HRC to weigh in on American election law is “an insult to the United States that the NAACP thinks we should be getting advice from those kinds of countries, which are not democracies, on how to administer elections in this country.”

Shelton refutes that notion, claiming that the NAACP’s presence at the Geneva Conference can set examples for other nations interested in improving their electoral systems.

“We can learn a lot from those who haven’t gone through as much as we have,” he said. “Everyone has a different struggle, but there’s lessons to learn from whoever we come across ... but there’s also some things I think we can still help teach the rest of the world.”

Spakovsky is unconvinced. “I think the leadership of the NAACP is, quite frankly, doing a disservice to American citizens and the democracy that we have here, by going abroad to the Human Rights Council, which is filled with dictatorships and other countries that actually and really abuse human rights.”



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