



## OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

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**MEDIA CONTACT:** Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony  
(313) 347-2820

### **Let The People Vote. The Courts Have Spoken Block The Ban On Straight Party Voting**

The recent ruling by federal court Judge Gershwin Drain to block Michigan's ban on straight party voting is a victory by all who believe in democracy. This ruling, which pushes back the ban on straight party voting, gives those citizens who live in our urban communities in particular, a fair chance without the imposition of long lines, insufficient equipment, short staff, and sometimes inadequate information at polling places concerning their proper location. This is often due to a lack of financial resources from the state as well as laws which impose photo ID requirements, and proof of American citizenship beyond normal identification. President Franklin D. Roosevelt said:

*"Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves. And the only way they can do this is by not voting."*

PA 268, passed into law and signed by Governor Rick Snyder in January, was deemed by the court to have a disproportionate effect on African Americans. When one considers that African Americans and other minorities often use the straight party voting method to cast their ballots, it appears as though this law was intended to place a target on their backs and a broken lever in their hands.

Many have indicated that this law would do nothing more than cast a very negative shadow on the voting process. It would not lead to more efficiency in voting, bring out more people to the voting booths, or create a more current enthusiasm for voting in future elections. One wonders if this was intended to restrict, reduce, and therefore eliminate an entire generation of voters who for the first time might have the ability to vote in a presidential election.

The five million dollar appropriation from the state legislature, as Judge Drain describes, was "woefully insufficient." We believe that the actual cost ranges between 30 and 40 million dollars.

We agree with Governor Rick Snyder that "voting straight party or individual is not just about partisan politics." However to us, it is about accessibility, efficiency, and the right of all citizens to cast their ballots for an entire party, or whatever method they may choose, that is both legal and identifiable for the candidate of their choice. The idea of appealing the decision of the court, by State Attorney General Bill Schuette, appears to be more partisan than impartial.

The courts have ruled of the disparate effects on a segment of Michigan's voting population. If the state of Michigan and our elected leaders really believe in an open, transparent, and fair process for all of its citizens, then it would make certain that all walls erected to prevent such access by the people would be torn down immediately.

America has long been the standard bearer when it comes to exercising democratic rights and the right to vote. This ban on straight party voting would simply choke the very spirit and desire of many Michiganders who live in our urban communities not to take their soles to the polls and vote. Rather, to use their feet to make a steady beat right back to their homes and take a seat. We applaud the decision of federal court Judge Gershwin Drain in standing up for the right to vote.

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