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## ACTION ALERT

**DATE:** September 11, 2007  
**TO:** Concerned Parties  
**FROM:** Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

### **NAACP-Supported Legislation to End Intimidating and Deceptive Practices in Federal Elections Passes Senate Committee** *Bill Aimed at Eliminating False or Misleading Information and Correcting it in Time for Full Voter Participation is Now Poised for Full Senate Consideration*

#### **THE ISSUE:**

Unfortunately, some people are so desperate to win elections that they resort to deceptive practices – misinformation and lies – to try to keep legitimate voters away from the polls or to support candidates whom they might not otherwise vote for. It is even more unfortunate that these practices often target and exploit vulnerable populations, such as racial or ethnic minorities, the disabled and / or the poor.

To address these undemocratic, disenfranchising and immoral activities, Senators Obama (IL), Schumer (NY) and others have introduced S. 453, the *Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act*. **This bill, which has already passed the House by a unanimous vote, was approved of by the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday, September 6, 2007, and is now ready for consideration by the full US Senate.** This bill seeks to address the real harm of these crimes – people who are prevented from voting by misinformation – by establishing a process for reaching out to misinformed voters with accurate information so they can cast their votes in time. The bill also makes voter intimidation and deception punishable by law, and it contains strong penalties so that people who commit these crimes suffer more than just a slap on the wrist.

Examples of malicious deceptive practices were rampant as recently as the general election in 2006. In Orange County, California, 14,000 Latino voters got letters in Spanish saying it was a crime for immigrants to vote in a federal election. It didn't say that immigrants who are citizens have the right to vote. In Maryland, misleading fliers were handed out in predominantly African American neighborhoods with the heading "Democratic Sample Ballot" and photos of black Democratic leaders – and boxes checked off beside the names of the Republican candidates for Senator and Governor. In Virginia, registered voters received recorded calls that falsely stated that the recipient of the call was registered in another State and would face criminal charges if they came to the polls.

It is unfortunate but true that S. 453 / H.R. 1281, the *Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act* needs to be passed now, before another election comes, more lies are told and more voters are locked out of the democratic process.

[More...](#)

## **THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:**

Contact both your Senators and **URGE THEM TO SUPPORT THE *DECEPTIVE PRACTICES AND VOTER INTIMIDATION PREVENTION ACT***. To contact your Senators, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators' offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:  
The Honorable (name of Senator)  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**A SAMPLE  
LETTER IS  
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, simply go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), and click on "Contacting the Senate"; you can look your Senators up either alphabetically or by state. Unfortunately, not all Members of Congress have e-mail addresses.

REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!

## **THE MESSAGE**

- Even as recently as the 2006 election, various groups were targeted with deceptive mailings, fliers and phone calls, intended to mislead them into not voting or voting for a candidate based on blatantly false information.
- All too often, these lies or "deceptive practices" target and exploit vulnerable populations, such as racial or ethnic minorities, the disabled and the poor.
- We need strong federal legislation to ensure that voters are given corrected information in time to cast an unfettered vote, and that individuals and groups found guilty of knowingly attempting to discourage legitimate voters from going to the polls or of providing misinformation are punished for their undemocratic and immoral deeds.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!  
If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

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## Sample Letter

(date)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**RE: SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION TO END DECEPTIVE PRACTICES  
AND FRAUD IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS, S. 453 / H.R. 1281**

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_;

As your constituent, I am very disturbed by the numerous on-going problems related to deceptive practices in federal elections. It is sad that some people are so desperate to win elections that they resort to deceptive practices – lies – and misinformation to try to keep legitimate voters away from the polls or to support candidates whom they might not otherwise vote for. It is even more alarming to me that these practices often target and exploit vulnerable populations, such as racial or ethnic minorities, the disabled or the poor.

That is why I hope that you will support the *Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act*. The bill, which passed the US House in June by a unanimous vote seeks to address the real harm of these crimes – people who are prevented from voting by misinformation – by establishing a quick response process for reaching out to misinformed voters with accurate information so they can cast their votes in time. This bill also makes voter intimidation and deception punishable by law, and it contains strong penalties so that people who commit these crimes suffer more than just a slap on the wrist.

There were many instances of undemocratic, disenfranchising and immoral deceptive practices as recently as the 2006 election. In Orange County, California, 14,000 Latino voters got letters in Spanish saying it was a crime for immigrants to vote in a federal election. It didn't say that immigrants who are citizens have the right to vote. In Maryland, misleading fliers were handed out in predominantly African American neighborhoods with the heading "Democratic Sample Ballot" and photos of black Democratic leaders – and boxes checked off beside the names of the Republican candidates for Senator and Governor. In Virginia, registered voters received recorded calls that falsely stated that the recipient of the call was registered in another State and would face criminal charges if they came to the polls.

We must take definitive action against these actions. Thus, I hope that you will co-sponsor and support the *Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act*. I further hope that you will contact me to let me know what I can do to help you address this scourge upon our democratic process.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and  
remember to include your address)

*Remember to contact  
BOTH your Senators.*