

March 16, 2006

**NAACP "Deeply Disappointed" at U.S. Department of Justice Pre-Clearance of the New Orleans Municipal Elections**

President Gordon calls Justice Department action "disappointing" and promises the NAACP will continue to work to ensure city voters in and out of the city have the chance to vote in next month's city elections

NAACP President & CEO Bruce S. Gordon said Attorney General Alberto Gonzales called today to inform him that the U.S. Department of Justice has decided to pre-clear the New Orleans election plan for the April 22 municipal election. "The NAACP is deeply disappointed with that decision and we are utilizing the best legal minds available to evaluate the Justice Department's decision," said Gordon.

"Under any circumstances, the NAACP believes that by this action, the department has not properly enforced Sections 5 and 2 of the Voting Rights Act," Gordon said. "This is not the final step and let's be clear that the NAACP does not accept this as the final step in our efforts to protect the rights of New Orleans voters."

In a letter to Gordon, Gonzales said, "Let me assure you that the Department's work in New Orleans is not done." He said, "The Department will continue to work diligently to serve New Orleans voters and to ensure that all eligible voters – including minority voters – are able to participate fully in the upcoming elections."

Meanwhile, Gordon said the NAACP will continue partnering with other groups that plan to transport New Orleans voters who have temporarily relocated outside of Louisiana back to the city to vote. In addition, the NAACP has opened 15 NAACP Voter Assistance Centers in nine states to aid New Orleans voters to register to vote and file absentee ballot applications. Gordon said that the absentee ballot process is complex. "It relies on getting the absentee ballots into the hands of voters who in turn have to submit applications and get them notarized. Without having accurate mailing addresses, there is no certainty that applications will be received. The deadline to file an absentee ballot application is March 22."

With 24 candidates running in the election for mayor, Gordon said: "It will be difficult for voters to make informed decisions about the various candidates."

Gordon said out-of-state satellite voting locations would allow New Orleans voters to participate in a democratic election in the same way satellite voting locations in the United States were made available for Iraqi voters to vote in the recent Iraq national elections. "Certainly we can do no less for Americans temporarily displaced by Hurricane Katrina," said Gordon.

Gordon pledged the NAACP will continue to fight on behalf of New Orleans' voters living in and out of Louisiana. "One way or another we will do everything in our power to protect their right to vote." The NAACP has set up a special hotline for New Orleans voters to get information on voting. The number is **1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683.) and is established in partnership with People For the American Way Foundation and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.**

Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.

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