

# REPUBLICAN NATIONAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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Dear Ms. Heaphy and Mr. Rodriguez:

In a story entitled: “GOP links to vote-fraud push,” reporter Greg Gordon makes a number of misstatements and mischaracterizations that require immediate correction. We will try to set the record straight with respect to both on the Republican National Lawyers Association, and more importantly, on vote fraud.

The article refers to an April 2006 speech by Presidential Advisor Karl Rove at the RNLA’s National Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., but grossly misrepresents the speech. First, Mr. Rove’s comments on vote fraud were in response to questions from audience members. It was not part of his formal speech to the attendees. Second, Mr. Gordon insinuates that Mr. Rove alluded to efforts to intimidate or disenfranchise Democrat voters. Mr. Gordon also suggests that RNLA was part of a “Republican ploy” to engage in such activities. These insinuations are both false and slanderous.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Gordon failed to perform any real research and is merely parodying allegations made up by those on the far left.

The most intensive study of allegations of voter suppression, by the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe found that: “Other than press reports, the EOM [Election Observation Mission] was not aware of such instances and was not able to identify any first-hand evidence for alleged vote suppression. The EOM was presented with a few examples of anonymous leaflets, allegedly distributed in the immediate pre-election period with the supposed intention to ‘suppress’ the vote of historically disadvantaged minorities. While recognizing the seriousness of such allegations, **the EOM was not provided with substantial evidence that such practices existed.**” (emphasis added).

Mr. Rove did discuss the need for Voter Identification in his speech. This merely puts Mr. Rove on the same page as many other leaders in the United States and, indeed, the world. Former President Jimmy Carter led a national bi-partisan coalition of liberals and conservatives, the “Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Electoral Reform,” that advocated a national system of voter photo identification in order to prevent vote fraud. The Carter-Baker report concluded that: “The electoral system cannot inspire public confidence if no safeguards exist to deter or detect fraud or to confirm the identify of voters. Photo IDs currently are needed to board a plane, enter federal buildings, and cash a check. Voting is equally important.”


Recent surveys on this subject indicate substantial public support for voter identification at the polls – with 81% support in a Wall Street Journal-NBC poll, including support from members of all political parties and ethnic groups.

While we do not speak for Mr. Rove, we can speak for the RNLA. RNLA does not, as Mr. Gordon states in his article, deploy lawyers to battleground states. Rather, the RNLA serves as a “conduit for [volunteer lawyer] referrals” to Republican candidates and campaigns as an April 12th Article in your news service explained. That article further explained –correctly - that the RNLA trains and educates lawyers, and that “at least 30 states” have certified these training sessions as continuing legal education classes for lawyers. No state would certify such training if it were partisan, let alone somehow advocated or countenanced voter “intimidation.”

Mr. Gordon’s article references Thor Hearne, formerly of the American Center for Voting Rights (ACVR). Mr. Hearne served as RNLA Vice President of Election Education (not operations, as the RNLA does not perform election operations) for one year until he left to become counsel to Bush-Cheney 2004, Inc. While Mr. Hearne remains a valued RNLA member, he has served no leadership role in the organization since joining that time. Moreover, not one member of the ACVR Board is a member of the RNLA Board. RNLA is not now, nor has it ever been, a client of Mr. Hearne. And finally, absolutely no coordination of any kind has ever occurred between the RNLA and the ACVR.

Most importantly, the RNLA continues to work to ensure that elections are open, fair and honest. That is our goal and that is our mission. We agree with Missouri Senator Kit Bond, the principal author of most recent national election reform law, who stated simply that we need “to make it easier to vote and harder to cheat.” We would hope that McClatchy and its readers from across the political spectrum would support such a basic goal.

Sincerely,



J.C. Boggs  
President



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First Vice President