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PENNSYLVANIA VOICE REPORTS ON ITS IMPACT ON 2008 ELECTION, REGISTERING NEARLY 300,000 NEW VOTERS, RE-GRANTING 12 NONPROFITS STATEWIDE, AND COORDINATING ELECTION PROTECTION SERVICES

(PITTSBURGH) – Pennsylvania VOICE, a statewide collaborative involving more than 60 organizations dedicated to nonpartisan voter registration and protection efforts, has released a preliminary report detailing its impact on the 2008 elections in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania VOICE partner organizations were responsible for registering 294,225 voters across the state during the 2008 calendar year (for the primary and general elections), and awarded 12 Pennsylvania nonprofit organizations a total of more than \$40,000 in re-grants to support their work in helping to engage under-participating constituencies in the voting process.

“Because of Pennsylvania’s significant impact on the 2008 Presidential elections, we knew how vitally important it was to involve the state’s citizens and protect their rights to vote,” said Pat Clark, Statewide Coordinator for Pennsylvania VOICE. “This new report we’ve released not only speaks to the breadth and depth of what we were able to achieve as a collaborative, but also provides information we hope voter rights advocates will use to ensure fairer elections in all 50 states.”

The 294,225 voters registered by Pennsylvania VOICE partner organizations make up more than 41 percent of the approximately 711,000 voters registered statewide in 2008, according to Clark.

In addition to its voter registration work, the collaborative coordinated a significant voter protection effort, which included informing voters and media of voter suppression efforts, working with the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s office to resolve questions on voter eligibility and emergency ballots, establishing a website providing publicly-accessible, real-time Election Day reports on voter protection issues through the state, and providing a election protection phone hotline for voters to ask questions and report Election Day issues.

Pennsylvania VOICE monitored nearly 4500 calls on election protection hotlines during Election Day (November 4, 2008), including nearly 1400 reports of voter

problems and issues, which were then investigated by collaborative personnel deployed statewide.

"The volume of election protection hotline calls we received speaks to Pennsylvania's status as a crucial battleground state in the 2008 elections," said Celeste Taylor, Director of Election Administration and Protection for Pennsylvania Voice. "But, more importantly, it speaks to the high level of awareness we were able to create throughout our campaign."

"Voters in Pennsylvania were more aware of their rights and more able to recognize voter suppression than in previous election cycles, thanks to the work of our partner organizations, legal counsel, and volunteers," Taylor noted. "Our diverse collaborative came together with the goal of ensuring Pennsylvania of a truly fair and democratic election, and we're proud of what they accomplished."

An important part of Pennsylvania VOICE's work this election cycle was to help organizations within the collaborative with funding, which it did via a re-granting program. Grantees participated in controlled, scientific evaluations of their work, the results of which will be published by Pennsylvania VOICE, along with final voter turnout numbers, upon publication of the final 2008 voter file by the Pennsylvania Department of State.

The re-grants were part of a Center for Civic Participation project, State Voices, designed to increase voter turnout and protect voter rights in a number of states, including Pennsylvania. According to Pat Clark of Jackson/Clark Partners, statewide consultant for Pennsylvania VOICE, the organizations receiving grants have done significant work in bringing in new voters to the state's rolls.

"This voter contact is important work," Clark said. "The groups we partnered with are reaching out to new voters, often with non-voting or underperforming constituencies who rarely if ever are reached by partisan campaigns. These are primarily community service organizations that will succeed in the peer-to-peer contact this effort requires. Those people who often get left out of the process trust these organizations."

Groups awarded the re-grants (with areas of state served) include:

- ACORN (Pittsburgh, Philadelphia)
- Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia (Philadelphia)
- Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (Pittsburgh, Penn Hills, Mon Valley)
- Congresso (Philadelphia)
- DemocracyRising PA (Statewide)
- Just Harvest (Pittsburgh)
- Mon Valley Providers Council (Allegheny County, Mon Valley)
- Penn Action LLC/Penn Erie (Erie)
- Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC) (Lehigh Valley)

Planned Parenthood Association of PA (Statewide)
Project H.O.M.E./Vote For Homes (Philadelphia)
Women's Voices. Women Vote (WVWV) (Statewide)

Pennsylvania VOICE, which received a total grant of more than \$70,000 for this project, committed to covering more than 400 precincts statewide on Election Day, and training and recruiting volunteers to help with those efforts.

ABOUT PENNSYLVANIA VOICE

Pennsylvania VOICE is a state-based collaborative of over 60 nonprofit, 501c3 partners, formed in 2005 to create and maintain better coordination, information, and communication among nonprofit civic participation organizations. The collaborative's nonpartisan mission is to engage underrepresented communities and socially responsible voters in the democratic process, develop new leadership from within constituencies and to establish collective action around a shared issue-based agenda.